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LA DAME
DE SAINTE HERMINE

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LA DAME de SAINTE HERMINE

BY

GRACE KING

Univ. of California

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LA DAME DE SAINTE HERMINE

CHAPTER I

IT was just before sunset of a July afternoon. Biloxi lay shimmering in a haze of beauty. The sky was blue, without a fleck of cloud. The Gulf, in front, just as blue, was sparkling with ripples that caught the sunlight. The sand beach was dazzling in its whiteness.

The tops of the forest trees, in the background, shone with the gilding of the level sun rays. To the right, facing the Gulf, stood the fort; stout and well built of heavy logs, through whose rugged bark the muzzles of cannon protruded. A tall palisade of pointed saplings surrounded it. Over it waved the banner of France from a tall staff. The government building, called the "Intendance," stood a little to the rear of the fort. It held the stores and supplies of the colony, and the counting-rooms of the government officials; also the chamber of the Superior Council, which was even now sitting.

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The clearing held, furthermore, a thick cluster of log cabins thatched with palmetto, the shelter of the soldiers. Sentinels paced in front of the fort and the Intendance; and a few groups of men and women strolled idly along the beach. A little band of Indians in their war paint and feathers, on a ceremonious visit to the governor of the colony, waited, stiff and rigid, under a great live-oak, whose roots were stretched over the soil like giant fingers grasping it and holding it, as it were, in defiance of the proud white banner that floated over the fort. The eye of God, that sees all, could have seen naught else, that afternoon, in Biloxi.

Out in the Gulf was a speck on the calm horizon. A ship was approaching under full sail in the light breeze. The Indians, whose stoicism was always broken by the sight of a ship under sail, watched it furtively. A little strip of island lying in front of the mainland screened the ship from time to time as it tacked to get in. The Indians knew this little island as Deer Island from the olden time of their ancestors when it was the haunt of the deer. Now, it was a mere crust of white sand covered with scrub oak, distorted and gnarled into grotesque shapes by the furious storms of the Gulf, which had made of the little island a scene of torment and torture. Between it and the mainland

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lay the snug little bay or harbour chosen by Iberville on his first voyage to Louisiana, where, as he proclaimed triumphantly in his report home, his ships could find good anchorage, a safe shelter from every wind, and perfect concealment from a pursuing enemy. The guns of the fort, as an observing eye might discern, were trained to cover the channel with their fire.

As the Indians watched the ship, the miracle that they had learned always followed incoming ships, occurred; a cannon was fired, the boom reverberating over the water and the beach and awakening in the forest the response of an echo which sounded like thunder. A flag was run up, the sails were furled, and as the ship turned the island into the channel behind, the anchor was dropped. A gun was fired from the fort and its flag dipped in salute to the flag of the ship.

At the sound of the cannon, the door of the Intendance was thrown open and the honourable members of the Superior Council walked forth, gravely and slowly, as befitted their dignity. Wherever they passed they were saluted with deep obeisance. An imposing group of men they were, dressed in official costume: knee breeches, broad-skirted coats, black silk stockings, and shoes with silver buckles. All wore wigs and three-corner hats.

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The ship was overdue with its supplies of stores and ammunition, and its news from France. Not a man in the Superior Council but had his own secret expectation of a reward for himself—a cross and promotion, a mention in the ministerial letter, or at least a reprimand for a rival. They walked with even, slow step toward the landing-place; the governor, the Sieur de Bienville, in advance, a man of presence but insignificant in his person; small, slight, and careless of his appearance, but with a head of great size. His face, although young, was seamed with fine wrinkles, his mouth compressed into flatness by a vigilant will, always on the alert for treachery and deceit. His grave, serious eyes were seemingly preoccupied.

At his side walked Jacques de la Chaise, the new lord high commissioner, recently arrived from France, equipped with powers that in truth rendered him superior to the governor himself. A handsome man he was, with serene and lofty expression of face. His eyes, unlike Bienville's, showed no preoccupation, but quiet, acute observation of the men about him. And still more, unlike Bienville, he wore a small moustache and a delicate, silky tuft of beard on his chin. He bore, to those who knew, a strikingly close resemblance to his famous uncle, the courtly confessor of Louis XIV, who, as it is well known, imitated the priestly

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model of dress set by Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin.

The rest of the group were the usual officials of the government, ordinary in looks and, in truth, in capacity. But among them or rather at the end of the little procession was one whom no one could overlook, in any assembly of the Old World or the New, the Chevalier Henri de Loubois, the major commandant of the colony. Not only was he tall and of fine proportions, but his face was strikingly handsome with olive complexion, firm black eyes, and a moustache that curled at the tips, showing a slightly supercilious, satirical mouth. His uniform set him off to advantage—not that he needed adventitious assistance to his good looks. He belonged to the time when a uniform was an important military asset. High boots, white breeches and white waistcoat, a blue coat faced with red, and brilliant with golden trimmings, a blue tricorne with a blue and white cockade at the side, set rakishly atop a well-frizzed perruque. The eyes of the women glistened as they saw him. As usual, when De Loubois made his appearance, he drew all eyes away from the governor and even from the high-and-mighty lord high commissioner.

In the meantime the ship had lowered a barge that was approaching the landing-place. The ship

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was the good ship *Aventurier*, so the gentlemen of the council repeated to one another, and that was the good Captain Béranger in the stern of the barge, bringing his budget from France. As the barge landed at the floating wharf of logs, the stragglers on the beach came forward to look, their women peering curiously behind them.

A file of soldiers marched from the fort under the command of a young officer and took up their position to present arms. And the inevitable contingent in every French settlement in America at that time, a band of Canadian coureurs de bois, in their deerskin leggings, moccasins and fur caps, swaggered forward to a good position in front, to show their indifference to the Frenchmen and their independence of anything France could send the colony; respecting among the councillors only Bienville, a Canadian like themselves, and at heart a coureur de bois.

The captain stepped from the barge, followed by his crew and walked toward Bienville, who stepped forward to meet him. The captain was in his full uniform as a captain of the Royal Marine, and he walked with an unusual display of importance, his face stiffening into an expression of portentous gravity betokening unspeakable calamities in his budget. His sailors followed him closely, eager to get ashore and begin their land

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frolics, glancing around at the women behind the file of soldiers. At the captain's side walked a small boy, a Malay, clad in the cast-off garments of the sailors, held with ropes and strings upon him. A heavy shock of black hair fell to his eyes. The captain made a low bow to the councillors, who were dumbfounded at his dignity and silence, so different from his accustomed good-tempered, easy-going manners and contempt of ceremony. He pulled from his coat a folded paper and held it toward the governmental group, with a low bow:

"Gentlemen, I have the honour—a missive from his Majesty!" Bienville, the imperturbable, motioned to one of the councillors to take it; and a dapper little man stepped eagerly forward and almost fell on his knees as he perceived the great seals on the envelope.

"Monseigneur," he called to Bienville, "a lettre de cachet!" and he held it up as if it were a statue of the Virgin. Bienville, who hated sensations, commanded harshly, "Well, read it!"

"A prisoner, monseigneur," interposed the captain, having ended his carefully prepared little comedy, "that I am ordered to bring to Louisiana and deliver into your hands." He turned and held out his hand to some one behind him who had been screened by the sailors—and a lady, like some

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miraculous apparition, was seen by all. She tried to stand at the captain's side, and hold up her sinking head, slowly raising her eyes to the men crowding closer around her; but then, in spite of the captain's hand, she began slowly to sink on the ground, her face turning to a still more ghastly pallor. Her eyes closed and she fell.

"Fool!" called a voice from the crowd of lookers-on, "will you let her die before your eyes? She must be put to bed at once." A tall woman with a long stride pushed through the crowd, and putting her arms around the fainting lady, lifted her up like a babe, and bore her away.

"Stop! stop!" called out the dapper little councillor, waving the lettre de cachet wildly. "I protest! It is against the us et coutumes de Paris!"

"Ass!" growled Loubois in the ear of Bienville.

Bienville snatched the lettre de cachet, waving in the air. "The devil! Monsieur, we follow here the 'us et coutumes' of Louisiana!" and he handed the letter to the amused De la Chaise.

Dame Catherine, paying no attention to the hubbub behind, strode steadily along with her burden to one of the log cabins near the fort, where, kicking the door open, she entered a small room and, laying the inert form on a bed in the corner, began to loosen her clothes. The little Malay boy, who at a sign from the captain had followed her with

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a hat and veil in his arms, fell on his knees by the bed and began to undo the lady's shoes.

The captain, in the meantime, dropping his official grandeur, was making his report in a confidential voice to Bienville. They had moved aside from the councillors, but not from Loubois, who kept close to them.

"It was a little after noon; we were just pushing off, everything done, all papers signed. I was standing on deck when I saw a carriage driving furiously up the quay, surrounded by a guard of shabby arquebusiers. It stopped in front of the ship and the officer ordered me to put out my plank again. A lady was dragged out of the carriage and, half carried, half pulled, put on the plank and shoved up to the ship. An old man, as ugly as the devil, and looking like a bandit, walked in front. He jerked her toward me, and put a letter in my hand. 'An order from the king!' said he, 'a prisoner of state to be taken to Louisiana and delivered to the governor,' and he rushed back to the land. 'Hell!' said I to myself. The plank was pulled in, the ship began to move, the carriage rattled away. She stood where he had thrown her, but quick as a flash, when the ship began to move, she sprang to the side and I caught her just in time. She fought like a wild animal, until I took her up in my arms and carried her to my

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cabin and threw her on my bed, and locked the door on her."

Nodding significantly to Bienville, "We had the devil's own weather—storm, wind, and rain. For a day and night I did not leave the deck. Then suddenly I remembered her, rushed to my cabin, and unlocked the door. There she lay, just as I had left her. Her eyes were closed and she was moaning. I called little Jacquot and shoved him into the cabin. 'Here, you take care of her. If you let any one in the room I will kill you!' And I locked the door again. He could not leave her, night or day, during the voyage. She would have died else. She was seasick all the time, he told me. You know, he could climb out of the porthole, to get to me when he needed me. We were a month making the voyage," he concluded tersely.

"Great God!" exclaimed Loubois, who had heard it all.

The captain shook his head. "There is something treacherous about it, Bienville; and I would not be surprised if a crime had been committed. You might investigate it. I have told you all I know; but depend upon it, there is plenty more to be found out. Rascality, rascality!" he muttered as he moved away; then, turning to Bienville again: "Suppose there has been a wrong committed against this lady, eh! I curse myself for a

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fool for putting out the plank at their command; but they might have thrown her into the sea! What was to prevent? Those were not real soldiers in the guard. They were ragamuffins, cut-throats, the offscouring of the high roads!" He moved away to where the barges from the ship were discharging their loads.

Bienville's anxious face became more troubled. The captain's words had started his cautious mind toward sinister Old World intrigues, which always intimidated him. He looked around. The councillors were all departed. "De la Chaise," he said to De Loubois, "I will go to De la Chaise, he can manage it."

"Great God in heaven, Bienville!" De Loubois broke out irascibly, "did you hear what the captain said? Brought on board by soldiers! Flung at the captain like a bundle of rags! No woman on the ship! No cabin but the captain's! A stormy voyage for a month! Seasick! With a little Malay boy to take care of her! Great God in heaven, but my blood boils at the thought of it! Majesty or no Majesty, I would like to run my sword through the man that signed that order!"

"What good would that do?" said the practical Bienville.

"And send her to Louisiana like, like ——" De Loubois spoke the ugly word that described, un-

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fortunately, too many of the women sent by the government to the colony lately.

"But she was not sent with them," soothed Bienville, "and Béranger is a good man."

But De Loubois pursued his furious thoughts. "And who is there to look after a woman prisoner?"

"Catherine will look after her. We could not find a better woman," responded Bienville staunchly.

De Loubois would not or could not control himself. His imagination kept piling up, within him, horror upon horror, suffering upon suffering.

"After all," Bienville reminded him, "Louisiana is better than the Bastille."

"We must do something, we must do something! Would to God I could do something for her!"

"The best thing," rejoined Bienville sensibly, "is to do nothing; to keep quiet about her; do not go around talking about her. Keep silent about what the captain has told us. If you start others, you know——" He ceased, knowing that De Loubois needed no more than a hint as to that danger.

"Bienville, you do not feel for her! My God, I could die for her!"

"Your heart is running away with you, Loubois, as the heart of every officer in the garrison will be, if he sees and hears you talk. The Indians have

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taught me to hold my tongue when I want to talk and to be quiet when I want to act," he added with a touch of rare loquacity.

"But what can I do? I cannot stay quiet like you! It is easy enough not to talk; my friends have taught me exactly what your enemies have taught you. But I must do something! It is ignoble to keep quiet under such an outrage!"

"Put a guard around Catherine's house. If our fine French officers discover her, it will be worse for her than the ocean voyage." Bienville's voice expressed a sneering contempt for the young French officers, daring to excess in every danger, particularly love. Love—the one danger, the one temptation of man, of which Bienville knew nothing and cared less.

"No," he bethought himself, "do not set a guard. Soldiers drink and talk. I will send my Indian boy, Bontemps; he can watch and never show what he is doing."

"And I will send Picot, my man," added the chevalier. "He can fool the devil himself."

"I will consult De la Chaise. He is better able than I to act in the matter. He can tell us what to do," continued Bienville.

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CHAPTER II

IN Dame Catherine's cabin, the lady lay on the bed like a young infant, and only moaned as the old woman removed the soiled, crumpled clothing and put upon her one of her own coarse white chemises.

"You must not be afraid any more; you are on the land; we are all your friends here!" she said, and she would not leave her until she had drunk a cup of hot tisane. "Now you will go to sleep and sleep all night. I shall lie beside you and Jacquot will be on the floor." As she talked, the tired body relaxed, the exhausted head drooped to one side on the pillow, and deep sleep came, as it sometimes comes to heartbroken humanity.

It was early the next morning that Jacquot, who had gone out to report to his captain, returned to the prisoner, still in bed. She lay so still and quiet, he thought she was sleeping, and knelt down at her feet as he had done on the ship. She opened her eyes fearfully, as if still in dread of the ocean. Jacquot crept on his knees to the head of the bed, and, laying his hand gently upon hers, said in his

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low, musical voice: "Madame, when the ship goes I go with it; tell me what I can do for you in France."

"Ah, Jacquot, my good little Jacquot!" She stretched out her hand and laid it on his shaggy head. "You are going to leave me! What shall I do? My good little Jacquot!" Her voice died away in a sigh.

"Madame, tell me to do something for you over there! You know I will do it! Madame, you have friends over there! Let me go to them. I will tell them where you are." His eyes burned with intelligence, like those of a dog seeking to be understood.

Her face was hidden in her pillow; she did not catch the meaning of his glance.

"Madame, madame, tell me!"

"I am so weak today, come tomorrow!" She put her hand inside the coarse white chemise and pulled out a little scapulary, kissed it, and passed the string over the boy's head. The tears were rolling down her cheeks. She hid her face again in the pillow.

The little boy pressed his face against her feet, got up from his knees, and stole out of the room.

Madame Catherine, who was a woman of energy, as we have seen, had opened the corded box of the lady that the sailors from the *Aventurier* had shoved

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into her room the day before, and taken from it what was needed for the lady's comfort; then with stolid firmness she forced her to rise and submit to being dressed. Her hands accomplished their unaccustomed task of dressing a lady's hair. A great arm-chair of rough wood had been made ready with cushions covered with skins and spread with a homely coverlid. In it she placed the lady, and untangled and combed her long black hair, platting it in Indian fashion, in two long plaits on each side of her head. The tired head looked lifeless as it rested against the cushions; the thin hands lay inert in her lap.

Beyond the open window which let in the cool breeze, the glittering Gulf lay limitless before her eyes. She turned her face away from it with an expression of pain, and Madame Catherine moved the chair around in front of the door that opened to the sight of a forest beyond whence the sweet perfume of the pines came in soft breaths on the air. But the tired eyelids were not raised nor were the pale lips opened in response. A little later, Catherine in a voice of clear distinctness said in her ear: "Monsieur de Bienville, the governor, and Monsieur le Commandant Militaire, Le Chevalier de Loubois." The lady gave no sign of hearing. The gentlemen stood behind her chair, look-

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ing upon her. Catherine repeated her announcement.

Bienville, coming around to her side, took the delicate, inert hand in his rough ones, and said with his usual bluntness, coming at once to the point in his mind: "You are among friends, madame. We have come to see what we can do for you."

Loubois impulsively threw himself on his knees, on the other side of the chair, taking her hand and kissing it.

"Madame, if you need a brother——"

She opened her eyes. "I have no brother!"

"Your family——" pursued the chevalier.

"I have no family."

"Your friends——"

"I have no friends."

"God in heaven!" burst from the lips of Loubois.

"God in heaven has abandoned me!"

Bienville, trained in acts and sights of cruelty from his childhood, felt the tears mount to his eyes. He pulled Loubois by the shoulder and walked from the room.

Loubois, kissing the little hand once more, followed him. "Did you see, Bienville?" the indignant words burst from his lips, as soon as they were outside the cabin. "A child, a child—nothing more! An orphan! No family, no friends,

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no God to stand by her." He grasped the handle of his sword and shook his handsome head defiantly at the sky where they both believed God dwelt. "Ha! What can be the reason? What is the crime? Bienville, you who know human nature, what do you think?" He stopped short in the path and grasped the arm of his friend.

"I know Indian nature, I don't know human nature," answered Bienville cautiously, adding, while the blood mounted slowly to his swarthy cheek: "but she is not guilty of a crime. I dare swear to that!"

"Thank you, thank you, Bienville!"—seizing his hand gratefully. "She is not guilty, she is a victim—a martyr to some damned conspiracy. She has an enemy. Ha!" A blood-curdling threat lay in his explanation.

"Béranger will find out," responded Bienville, restored to his coolness. "He has a clue to her family. He suspects foul play; he will find out and report on his return."

"Did you notice her little feet in her slippers, Bienville? And her hand trembled in mine! Would to God I could do something for her!"

Impassively Bienville repeated his warning: "The best thing you can do is to leave her alone." "Keep quiet about her—if you can," he would have liked to add.

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"And the white ruffle falling from her neck! Bienville, my mother used to wear a white ruffle like that! When I saw that—when I saw that, I tell you, Bienville——"

But Bienville, unsentimental, turned away to enter the door of the Intendance where his overburdening duties as governor were awaiting him. In the Intendance he found the new high commissioner, Jacques de la Chaise.

De Loubois went to the barracks, and in his room feverishly put together in his portfolio some paper, a quill pen, and a stand of ink. He called Picot. "Take this to La Dame de Sainte Hermine. The governor thinks she might have need of it. The ship does not go before tomorrow."

Picot bowed his head deferentially; a wink was in his mind, but he controlled his knowing eye in time. He carried the little packet to Madame Catherine, and gave it to her with a rose he had gathered on the way. "The governor sends this to the lady. She might wish to write a letter. The ship does not leave before tomorrow."

Madame Catherine received the parcel with comprehending silence and gave it with Picot's story to the lady.

Jacques de la Chaise was but a few years older than Bienville, and he showed the same effects

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of training in civilized life as the young governor showed in savage warfare.

Sent out by the Company of the Indies to investigate the conduct of affairs in Louisiana, which to the Company represented an impassable morass of corruption and intrigue, caused by the fancied or actual incompetency of its officials, he had at once begun to use the inquisitional powers with which he was charged, regardless of persons and consequences, and had in the few months since his arrival, reaped so far a full crop of hatred and opposition.

A man of surpassing dignity and self-composure, his handsome features always in repose, he was said to be able, with the most perfect urbanity, to goad an official under investigation to a frothing state of fury, while he forced him to respectful courtesy in his answers.

He was an aristocrat by birth and showed his gentle lineage. His wife came from as high a family as he did. As the nephew of the celebrated confessor of the great Louis XIV he was looked upon with superstitious awe by the French colonists. Bienville found him sitting at the great table which served the council board. He had just dismissed a victim and was jotting down notes in a cahier of the large portfolio before him. Like his distinguished uncle, the prelate, he re-

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ceived the interruption of Bienville with polished suavity of tone and manner; and listened to his communication with understanding, nodding his head in approval of it.

"I shall go to her myself, and find out what we want to know about her," he said, rising at the end of the interview.

"But she refuses to speak even to Madame Catherine, will not lift her head and refuses to eat. You will get nothing out of her," Bienville informed him candidly.

"I shall go to see her myself," said De la Chaise laconically. "I shall go to see her myself, to-morrow morning."

Bienville gave proper warning to Madame Catherine, and the commissioner found the lady just as Bienville and Loubois had found her the day before.

She received his visit just as she had theirs, with impassive indifference. Nevertheless when the commissioner sought Bienville two hours later he had his report or rather his brief of the case fully prepared, to Bienville's bewildered astonishment.

"Her name is Marie Alorge, called La Dame de Sainte Hermine from the Château de Sainte Hermine in Normandy, the daughter of the Sieur de Sainte Hermine and his wife, a lady of noble

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birth, both deceased. Her mother died at her birth. She was reared by her father and an old nurse, Martine Botto, and as soon as possible was placed in the care of the Ursuline Sisters, in a convent near St. Malo. She was happy there and was kept there until she was grown. It was evidently the best that could be done for her under the circumstances; but we must always acknowledge that a convent is a deplorable substitute for a mother. Her old nurse, who seems to have been a worthy woman, furnished all she ever knew of maternal tenderness. Her father, whom she saw but rarely, seems to have been a good but simple man. He died when she was in her sixteenth year. The news was brought to her in the convent by her uncle, the brother of her father, a savage rustic of brutal manners and of frightful tyranny."

The commissioner's fine features expressed disgust. "He was left by his brother's will guardian of the young girl, who was heir to her father's and her mother's fortune, which must have been considerable. Her mother also was an orphan, and left no relatives. The château should have become the property of Marie Alorge. At the time her uncle saw her, she was, I imagine" (De la Chaise interpolated), "as she is now, of great beauty and charm of manner. He must have been struck by them forthwith. She was morbidly shy

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and timid, the result of her convent education; had never decided the most trifling circumstance for herself."

De la Chaise sighed at his own presentiment.

"The day that the superior of the convent informed her that her uncle had decided to marry her to his son, a captain in the mousquetaires, she answered not a word. How could she? She knew nothing about marriage and less about men. She had never spoken to a man except her confessor, her father, and her uncle. The communication meant absolutely nothing to her," said the commissioner feelingly, "although if she had talked with her companions she might have had her eyes opened, for girls in convents are not necessarily ignorant of life. She had no spirit, in truth, as her uncle must have perceived. When the day came, chosen by her uncle and the lady superior, she allowed herself to be dressed in white with a veil on her head; but this did not impress her; convent girls are dressed in white for all occasions. She was led to the altar and there married to a stout, red-faced soldier. This also impressed her so little that she only gave him one look. Then she was taken out of the convent, as much a babe as when she was put into it, and they drove away to the château. The stout captain for some reason left them on the way. Alone with her uncle, she

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asked no questions, in perfect ignorance of the meaning of what he had done. At the château, her old nurse received her, and her cup of happiness was full. But"—and De la Chaise paused in delicate emphasis—"her old nurse informed her! She had no mother, you remember, and no instruction, except from nature. And then, not till then, she recalled that the captain was ugly and repugnant to her. Her imagination went to work and supplied the rest."

The commissioner shook his head ominously. "You see what happened?"

But Bienville did not see, he had no imagination.

"The captain was to return in a week and then——" The high commissioner paused delicately; and this time Bienville understood; he nodded.

"But what always happens in such cases, happened. A young fellow whom she did not know, but who had seen her, forced his acquaintance upon her. I suspect, but I only *suspect*, the nurse in this. She was young and beautiful, as we know. He was young, handsome, polished in manner. He spoke of love to her; he had no time to lose, you see. She recoiled in horror. What was love to her? 'Vade retro, Satanas.' That is what love is to the Sisters. She had sense or instinct enough to repulse him. He was not to be repulsed. He

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questioned the retainers and found out what he wanted to know. When the day came for the return of the bridegroom, the ferocious old father made great preparations. He had, of course, installed himself as master of the château. The bridal chamber was prepared, a bridal feast made ready, the bridal gown was brought forth and put on her by the old nurse, weeping. Papers were signed, re-signed—oh, there seems to be no flaw about that! But when all went to the banquet, she made an excuse and slipped away, ran into the garden and sought seclusion in an overgrown arbour! There the other suitor found her; wild, desperate—for she knew now. He fell on his knees before her and besought her to flee with him, on his horse just outside the wall; he put his arms about her. The blustering, swaggering groom appeared just then on the scene and commanded the lady to follow him. The other one drew his sword, and, in short, then and there delivered the lady from her Minotaur!"

"What the devil is that?" Bienville asked himself.

"She screamed and fainted; the alarm was given; a great uproar followed. The old father came cursing and swearing; he seized her and dragged her into the château; shut her up in her room and locked the door, cursing her for a mur-

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deress. The bleeding captain, cursing her in like manner, was brought into the bridal chamber and laid on the bed. In the bridal chamber! Oh, appearances were against her, I grant that. When the captain regained consciousness he added what he could to defame her and enrage still more his father. The old man did not hesitate, or rather he did; he could have lodged an accusation against her and brought her within reach of the gallows, this girl of eighteen! Instead, he kept her a prisoner and had overtures made to her. No, she preferred the gallows, and told him so. In desperation, then, he had recourse to other means. He procured a lettre de cachet—no doubt he kept a supply of them on hand; he bethought him of Louisiana, where all sorts of criminal women were being sent and kept there unable to get away. He had the whole affair in his hands—the lady and the property, which was, in short, what he was after; he cared not even for the life of his son."

Bienville, who could listen by the hour to the tedious, monotonous oratory of the Indians, felt much relieved when De la Chaise came to the end of the narrative that he took so much pleasure in elaborating. "And the young man?" he asked, "the handsome one; what became of him?"

"He made his escape on his good horse while they were carrying in the captain. She does not

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know what became of him; never asked and does not seem to care."

"Was she agitated?" asked Bienville. He himself had been very much agitated, and had been forced to use his handkerchief.

"I cannot say that she was," answered De la Chaise carefully. "She shed no tears, held her head high, straight and stiff, and spoke with horror of the danger she had escaped, not on the high seas but in the bridal chamber—but her hands trembled." (De la Chaise looked at his own—handsome, white, and aristocratic.) "I do not know anything more pathetic than the sight of a little hand trembling with the emotion that the face will not own!"

"And now, what can be done?" asked Bienville, coming to the point.

"As for the lettre de cachet"—De la Chaise shrugged his shoulders—"its bark is worse than its bite."

He had much more to tell Bienville about lettres de cachet, and went on in spite of the Canadian's evident fatigue, "Lettres de cachet are now, my friend, only goblins to scare children."

"But——" began Bienville.

"In truth there are but few families in France who have not suffered from them." And without considering Bienville's impatience, he pursued his

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thought. "Their raison d'être in the beginning was the preservation of the honour of families. Any father had the right to ask for a lettre de cachet against his daughter and to shut her up, if he feared she was on the point of dishonouring her family!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Bienville, beginning to see a little clearer.

"Only a fear, derived from appearance, was necessary for such a demand by a father, and the demand was rarely refused. The consent of the king was easily obtained and" (De la Chaise smiled slightly) "the favour was obtained easier by a wife against a husband. One of them in prison, the other one retained the right of administration of the property."

"Aaaah!" exclaimed Bienville, who saw still clearer.

"Ladies," continued De la Chaise steadily, "were sent to convents chosen by the king, who paternally sought their moral improvement. It would be impossible to calculate the number of lettres de cachet used in the provinces. Their record is kept rigorously secret in the archives. They are the exclusive privilege of the king, and are in truth the foundation of our society. The institution is as strong as the Bastille. In the reign of our glorious Louis XIV," said De la Chaise,

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politely including Bienville in his vast knowledge of that court, "their use was widespread and even his own first cousin was not spared. He was not troubled by any scruple in his administration of family justice. Acts in the interests of justice, acts in the interests of families! I have seen many a one with the marginal note, 'The king accords this to a father—to a brother,' generally to spare the family the grief of an unsuitable marriage, and sometimes both lovers were incarcerated; the young man at St. Lazare, and the young woman in some convent. Such and such a priest would be shut up for fear that he would dishonour religion or bring scandal on the Church. They were never tried. The justice of the king was the only authority; and, after all, a king never acts from malice or caprice. Even in his arbitrary acts he maintains his character for justice and moderation, even as God does." De la Chaise paused reverently.

Bienville rushed in at the opening with a question, "But this lady? this lady! I——"

"I have told you that for her the lettre de cachet is of no importance, but it is protected by tradition; it is a superstition. We would lose time by trying to set it aside or demanding justice. I speak from experience and I believe that I am right. But what is of importance is the marriage. That is grave; that will hold her to all eternity.

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It is protected by a higher authority than the king and its bastille will never be questioned. The one may be razed to the ground some day, as I have heard predicted, but the other, never! Never!"

Bienville shook his head dejectedly.

"Otherwise——" The high commissioner shrugged his shoulders. "Why not? Liberty is not what women care for; that is to them unimportant. Love and happiness is their 'sine qua non.'" At Bienville's blank look he added, "She seems, in fact, created precisely for love and marriage."

"But how?" queried the ingenuous Bienville. "I cannot see." He blushed. "You say, you think. How can she find it here?"

"My friend, that is not our affair. She can find it anywhere! Perhaps she has already found a beginning of it! What you must look after, monseigneur, is her safety, her comfort."

"Her safety, her comfort," responded Bienville. "Her safety is easy enough, her comfort! Dame!"

"I was coming to that," said De la Chaise, somewhat untruthfully. "The king provides for the comfort of such prisoners, as is right. He allows a pension for their maintenance. It must go in with the regular expenses of the colony, of course. I can see to that. I will so instruct the treasurer. And she must have an attendant to wait on her. Madame Catherine must not be imposed upon."

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"But I am going to the new place on the Mississippi, to found a city by order of the Company. I go in a week," protested Bienville.

"Take her with you, take her with you! You are responsible for her safe-keeping; do not leave her behind you! De Loubois will always be there to look after her when you cannot."

The high commissioner's eyes twinkled at a suggestion that was worthy of his old uncle the Jesuit confessor; but Bienville, of course, did not see the twinkle, and responded in sober earnest, much relieved:

"Yes, yes, he can protect her when I am away! I shall go to see him at once about it." He turned to leave the room.

"Be sure and tell him that the lettre de cachet is of no importance; but the marriage stands, and cannot be annulled," were the last words of the urbane president of the Superior Council.

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CHAPTER III

DE LOUBOIS received his friend's communication with cordial acquiescence, and together they concerted the means of assuring the comfort of their prisoner or rather guest, a lady and one needing more comforts than the hardy Dame Catherine could be expected to furnish. As for a maid, there were always negro girls to be bought; and Bienville, who was a good judge of savage character, undertook this task. An order on the garde-magasin was all that was necessary for whatever else was needed.

De Loubois listened with more interest to Bienville's résumé of De la Chaise's talk than Bienville had shown to the original.

The story of the romance that had ended so tragically for the heroine roused all his chivalrous indignation and resentment; and he expressed himself in so violent an ebullition of feeling over it, that his friend had to calm him and remind him of what the Canadian never forgot, the danger of being overheard and the necessity of caution in

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the midst of spies, of which Louisiana possessed a surplus.

In truth the chevalier always forgot the existence of his body-servant, Picot, and the existence of ears on his head, with the result that Picot knew everything that his master knew, particularly as much as he knew about the Dame de Sainte Hermine.

When at the cabin, the portfolio was put into her hand and the rose, she received both apathetically, and only by degrees acted on the hint conveyed by the parcel.

She opened the pretty leather case on her lap, unscrewed the silver top from the inkstand, without noticing the coat of arms elaborately emblazoned on them (the chevalier being heedless when acting on an impulse), tried the quill-pen in her fingers, and finally, as the chevalier knew she would, began to feel an impulse to write; and for the rest of the morning she was occupied with the following:

MAMAN MARTINE: My uncle deceived me, he did not take me to the convent. All day he sat by me in the corner of the chaise and never spoke to me. I sat in my corner and thought of you. When we stopped to change horses, he sent me a cup of milk and a roll. Instead of going to the convent, the chaise turned into another road and at daylight we came to a place on

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the water, as I saw through a crack in the curtain. When we stopped he took me by the wrist, and dragged me out of my seat and pulled me to the outside, and before I knew what he was doing, he pulled me up a plank on to a vessel. I pulled back from him all I could. He took a paper out of his pocket and gave it to the captain of the vessel, who received it with a low bow, and then my uncle turned and left me! and the vessel began to move away from the quay. I ran to the side and tried to throw myself over, but the captain caught me, and held me and at last carried me away to a cabin and threw me on a bed, and went out locking the door after him. I rose from the bed and tried to look out; but the vessel gave a lurch and I fell on the floor! I could hear the waves on the side of the ship and then I felt so ill, I crawled back to the bed and there I lay: so ill, so wretched I prayed to die! I passed from day to night and from night to day without noticing it. The vessel was always rolling from side to side and the waves dashing over it, the crew shouting and the captain cursing and swearing. I did not know how long the time was, until one day we stopped; and the captain opened the door. "We have arrived," he said, "and we will land." I did not care. I was too weak and miserable to answer. Two sailors lifted me from the bed, and the captain threw my cloak around me.

They put me in a boat and brought me to land.

When we reached the land, they put me on my feet. I would not open my eyes, but the captain, taking my arm, urged me forward. I made a few steps and opened

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my eyes and saw men looking at me. I felt dizzy, everything went round. I fell. Some one caught me and brought me to the house where I am. It was Dame Catherine who caught me. She is good and kind.

The little boy Jacquot, who takes this to you, never left me on the ship; he stayed in the cabin with me all the time. Reward him.

MARIE ALORGE.

I wish I could write more, but I am so weak and miserable.

When she had folded the letter and addressed it, she kept it in her hand. Her head was leaning back on the cushions and her eyes were closed, when she heard Jacquot's voice:

"Yes, madame, we are to go tonight. Tell me what to do for you."

"My good little Jacquot, my good little Jacquot!" She laid her hand on his head, and spoke in a whisper:

"At St. Malo, find your way to the Château of Sainte Hermine, and seek Dame Martine Botto, my old nurse. Give her this and tell her I am alive; tell her where I am; tell her all! And give her this."

She looked round despairingly, put her hand inside her coarse chemise and pulled out a crumpled handkerchief. "Give her this!" And she kissed it and put into the boy's hand.

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"Tell her all, all!" The tears gushed from her eyes. "God bless you, Jacquot, and bring you back to me." She pressed her hand upon his head. "You have been kind to me, God will reward you!"

Jacquot did not leave the land until the high commissioner, by means known only to him, and to other lord high commissioners, obtained the letter and read it, taking a note of names in it, and the address it bore, without the cognizance, naturally, of the sleeping Jacquot.

It was one of the means to acquire the omniscience necessary to the successful fulfilling of his high-sounding office.

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CHAPTER IV

MADAME CATHERINE was over six feet tall, almost as tall as her deceased husband; and she had the build of a coureur de bois, sinewy and athletic. Her face too was the face of a good coureur de bois, with strong, regular features; steady, clear grey eyes, and a weather-beaten skin. She was past fifty and she showed it.

She and her husband were born on the concession in Canada of Charles le Moyne, father of Bienville.

The Chevalier de Loubois, whose good heart seldom lagged on a mission of charity, began at once the assumption of his responsibility by going to see the lady and making an effort to engage her attention on her surroundings, and with the natural inference that she wanted to know who her jailers were, began an account of the nearest and most intimate one.

She did not seem to care to listen at first, looking beyond to the trees in the forest, but he persisted, glancing only intermittently at her face.

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"Catherine's training was that of a soldier in camp. From early childhood she had been taught to handle an axe, a gun, and a canoe paddle, and in her youth no boy could surpass her in the use of any of them. Beyond this she was taught religion, madame, the religion of the Canadian priest. As a young girl her parents prided themselves on her strength more than on her good looks. But if she had good looks, which of course she had, she did not know it.

"It is said that when she became of marriageable age, one of the great Le Moyne brothers fell in love with her, and tried to persuade her to share his fine name and adventurous life—one of the elder brothers.

"She always said she carried Bienville in her arms when he was a baby, and I can believe it; she treats him like a baby still. But she cared for one man only: her childhood companion, Etienne Roy, known all over Canada, by the time he was twenty, as an Indian fighter and guide, trusted by the governor, looked up to by all the coureurs de bois of his time. A splendid man, madame, I assure you. Different from the men of his kind, he never cared for women, or drinking—the great passions of coureurs de bois. When he returned after one of his long adventures, and an absence of a year, with his moccasins worn out and ragged,

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and marks of burning on his face, his eyes sought in the groups that stood around to greet him until they lighted on Catherine, his old playmate. He strode up to her and seized her hand and they walked together to her mother's cabin. Catherine had no father. And the next day they walked to the chapel and were married." The chevalier motioned with his hand to show how summary it was.

"Iberville, before starting on his great voyage of discovery of the Mississippi River—which you do not know, madame, and indeed it is not necessary for you to know, that it was a discovery that La Salle undertook and failed in—Iberville stipulated that a certain number of Canadians should accompany him; and he sought at once his old friend Etienne and tried to persuade him to sail with him. But the coureur de bois stuck to his own element and would not go to sea, but promised Iberville to join him after the discovery of the river, wherever he should land, in the southern country of America.

"When word came to the Canadian that Iberville had succeeded, and was making a settlement in a new country named Louisiana, Etienne at once set out from Montreal with his rifle and knapsack, but not alone. Catherine went with him with her rifle and her pack on her shoulders; dressed as he

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was in skin breeches and shirt and leggings and moccasins, with a fur cap on her head. She was almost as tall as her husband, and looked like a younger brother. It took them a year to reach the new settlement and find Iberville and Bienville, who was with him, a thin youth who, as I have said, Catherine had carried as a baby in her arms. And that is all I have ever got Catherine to tell me. But madame," said the chevalier, "I have thought about it often and—pardi! I would rather have had their honeymoon than the honeymoon of any bridal couple in romance. Imagine! Imagine, madame, what their life was in the wild forest, braving together there the pursuing savages, sharing together their crust of bread and handful of parched corn! I used to pray to God to send me such a honeymoon," he sighed.

"From Mobile they followed Iberville and Bienville up the Mobile River, to Fort Louis, and when that was abandoned, they came back to Mobile and to Dauphin Island and afterward to this settlement of Biloxi, where they built this little cabin to live in between long expeditions to Mexico and up the river, and out into the west to find the truth about the silver mines reported by lying adventurers to be there. The cabin has, as you see, only one large room, which is all they needed, for they persisted in sleeping in the open air, and

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Catherine did her cooking always as if they were in the forest, in an iron pot hung over the fire from a forked stick."

The weak, listless lady in the chair listened with but small show of interest, fixing her eyes, not on the handsome face before her but far above and beyond, on the blue sky where dwelt her thoughts at that moment.

But the chevalier persisted in his story, just as if she had no attention but for him: "Etienne went once too often up the Mississippi, and this time without his wife, among savages who hated and feared the French. He was shot from the bank, and fell dead in his canoe, which floated downstream until it was stopped by a boat full of soldiers, sent up to the Natchez country. They carried the body of the scout on with them and buried it in the forest, where, as Catherine said, he would want to lie and wait until Judgment Day, when he could rise, and where, were it in the presence of God himself, he could take vengeance on his murderer as Catherine approved notwithstanding all her religion; although she admits the red man at that time would be as dead as the white man could make him.

"So she stayed along in the province with Bienville, who was left in charge by Iberville; and when Iberville died—he was not killed like Etienne, but

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died ignominiously of yellow fever—Bienville became governor.

"And now there is to be another move," said the chevalier. "Bienville has at last received the order from the Company to make a settlement on the bank of the Mississippi, in the place he had fixed upon when a lad following Iberville, a place that Etienne also had selected as the only proper place to make a city that would be able to hold the river to the mother country as Montreal held the St. Lawrence. In fact the settlement has already been made; soldiers have been sent there to make a clearing, and lumber has been transported for the cabins to be built. Many of the women of the establishment have already been sent in barges, that did not go through the mouth of the river, but along the lakes that communicated to a little bayou which leads straight to the spot."

"And that is the way we shall go," said Dame Catherine, who had joined them.

The lady roused herself here. "Do you—do you and I have to go?"

"We cannot be left behind!" said the old woman.

"Oh! But, Madame Catherine, would we have to go on the water?"

"Of course we have to go on the water, if we go by the lakes."

"Oh, but I cannot go on the water!"

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"You do not expect the good God to change the country for you, do you?"

"Madame Catherine, I am so afraid—of the water!"

"There is no reason to be afraid." The Canadian woman was beginning to be cross.

"Oh, me, oh!" The lady hid her face in her hands.

Thus Bienville found her when he appeared to carry on his share of this work of responsibility.

Bienville took the older woman aside to confer with her; holding her familiarly by the arm and talking to her in the Canadian patois that he never used before his French collaborators.

De Loubois took again the low chair by the lady's side, where he had been sitting. "Madame," he asked gently, "what is troubling you?"

She shook her head and pressed her handkerchief to her eyes. "Ah, monsieur, I am so unhappy!"

"That is true, madame; I know that—but we want you to be less unhappy with us. We want you to feel that."

She shook her head and refused to show her face, but from behind her handkerchief she spoke. "Ah, monsieur, I thought I was to stay here without any more moving! But to go on the water again—that water that made me suffer so much!

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In truth, monsieur, as you see I am a coward. I cannot help it!"

"We are all cowards about something, madame. I tell you that, great strong man as you see me here, I am a coward—yes, a miserable coward."

"And what are you afraid of, monsieur?"

"A lady's tears, madame; I would run away rather than face them! You are frightening me, now, almost out of my senses!" He seemed so sincere, as he spoke, that she took down her handkerchief and wiped the tears away.

"Monsieur," she said in a weak, trembling voice, "I am going to be brave, like Madame Catherine, who is not even afraid of the Indians!"

"That is right, madame, be brave like Madame Catherine; do not fear the water!"

"And like you, monsieur, who are not afraid of anything!" she said in a weak voice.

"I have told you, madame, I am most afraid of tears; after that, I confess to you, I am afraid of Catherine! Indians are nothing in comparison to her. You do not know how fierce, how ruthless she can be when she wants to make you do her will; when, for instance, she wants you to take some noxious dose of medicine. Did you ever have to take medicine, madame? Ah, you do not know? When I came to Louisiana I was a boy, I had never been ill in my life; sickness

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did not exist for me. So I had never taken a dose of medicine. I was a cadet in a regiment of foot. We were sent to Fort Louis—where I did not meet the Indians that I longed to meet; but instead a deadly fever, a pernicious fever such as we do not dream of in France. All the regiment took it and most of them died of it. I would have died of it assuredly, too, but for Madame Catherine, because I simply would not take the medicine prescribed for me by the brute of a doctor. Fancy a soldier acting like that! But I was a child as I say. Madame Catherine took it upon herself to nurse me instead of leaving me alone like a poor wretch; and—do you know?—Madame Catherine has infamous ways of making one take a dose of medicine, ways that are not known in polite society. She would hold my nose until I choked and then force it down my throat! Once she threatened to spank me! Me, an officer in his Majesty's army! And one day when I still defied her and was most impudent to her, she turned upon me and shook her finger at me and told me that she would leave me to die like the rest, but she would not let my soul go out of the world like an animal in a state of sin! She walked away and said she was going at once for a priest to prepare me for the end!"

"Ah!" exclaimed the lady involuntarily.

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"And what do you think I did? Madame, I turned over in bed and I cried; I sobbed worse than you could possibly do. 'I was to die, then?' I said to myself. 'Poor me! So young, so full of life and ambition for my country, and flag!' I felt my heart breaking for pity for myself. And I thought of my mother, and of my father, my brothers and sisters! And I would be buried outside the fort in the forest where the others were buried! I saw it all, and more; and the more I thought of it, the more I cried. When I heard any noise, I thought it was the priest coming in with the dreadful crucifix, and I tried to hide under the sheet. I assure you I was glad enough when Madame Catherine returned and I submitted without a word to all her humiliations. I even reminded her when to give me the next dose! You must take your medicine, too, madame, or Madame Catherine will call the priest."

She smiled, even laughed, and he kissed her hand gratefully as if for a kindness. At least he had succeeded in his undertaking of diverting her.

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CHAPTER V

MOVING was no novelty to the French settlers in Louisiana. During the twenty years of their tenure of the soil, they had changed from Dauphin Island to Mobile; up the Mobile River to Fort Louis, and when driven away by high water back again to Mobile, and again to Dauphin Island. A longer stay had been granted them in Biloxi, and the greater number of them would have gladly remained there, exchanging for the bare comfort of its climate and its ease of life the dreams that had lured them to adventure in the New World. But when Bienville had obtained from the Company of the West the ardently solicited word to found the city of his ambition on the Mississippi, he began the work of uprooting the plantings he had made in Biloxi and, energetic commander that he was, he put into execution at once the plans he had been making for twenty years past, and that he had held on to despite the rancorous opposition and unscrupulous objections of his fellow commissioners. As a boy he had visited the site with Iberville, and had grasped, as did his brother,

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the immense project of establishing for France a city that would hold the great river of the Mississippi, as Montreal held the St. Lawrence, to the mother country, and thus frustrate forever any projects that Great Britain might form.

The storehouses and government buildings were demolished, and their contents and the timber loaded on ships and sent around to the proposed site by the mouth of the river. The ammunition and the garrison followed; he himself sailed with these. The women and children had been sent in the government barges by way of the lake and little bayou that led to within easy distance of his selected spot, an easy and safe route. And now the last convoy of barges waited for the contingent of women and children remaining to be sent on. They were placed under the command of the Chevalier de Loubois, the major commandant of the province. Bienville had left the day before in the last shipload of men and implements. In the dark hours after midnight the barges drawn up at the landing had been loaded with furniture, bedding, and clothing for the women and children. As fast as they were loaded, they rowed out into the channel to await the rest of the convoy. The last barge of all remained to receive its load. It drew up to the landing and waited; its load was light and was soon disposed of. Some women

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with their children took their seats, making themselves comfortable for a long day's journey. And still the barge waited the command to start. The chevalier, standing by, grew impatient. He sent Picot on an errand. Picot returned with his arms filled with bundles and cushions. These he arranged in the stern seat of the barge; and again all waited. At last in the dim light, Madame Catherine could be seen advancing with her charge hanging on her arm.

Madame Catherine, like an old warrior, was dressed for service; in short skirt and leggings, with a man's cap on her head, and her rifle in her hand. The lady clinging to her arm walked slowly and reluctantly, dragging back at every step like an unwilling child, in spite of Catherine's exhortations. Aroused so early from her sleep, she seemed hardly awake. Her large-rimmed hat hung loosely upon her head; its voluminous veil dropped limply about her shoulders. She looked languidly at the scene before her, and when on the floating landing-place, holding back timorously, put out her foot in its little slipper and drew it back again and again. It seemed impossible for her to summon resolution enough to get into the barge. The chevalier waited a moment, and then with decision stepped forward, took her hand from Dame Catherine's arm, who with a nod ordered her to take

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her place; then, with a quick motion, he lifted the lady in his arms and stepped with her into the barge, and placed her beside Dame Catherine.

"There, madame," he spoke in his soft voice in her ear, "do not be afraid! There is nothing to be afraid of. Dame Catherine is here beside you. Picot is there to serve you, and Monsieur Bienville has sent his Indian Bontemps to look after your comfort. We will soon be at the end of our journey, but we must start at once!" Stepping back he gave the command for the barge to pull off.

A little Indian girl sitting on the floor of the boat moved up so as to place her lap for a footstool under the lady's feet. "That is Bébé," said Madame Catherine.

As the barge drew away, a native pirogue paddled by two Indians took its place; the chevalier stepped into it, and the pirogue shot ahead of the line of waiting barges.

As they reached the open water, Biloxi seemed to float behind them like a mirage in the early light with its white beach and the forest at its back; the open space, where had been its cabins, was bare and deserted; but the fort stood out distinct and brave, although its white banner had not mounted yet to the point of its pine tree staff.

Biloxi was being handed back to nature, after serving its time for France, and a shadow of sad-

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ness spread over the faces of the women who were departing from it. Not one of them but was leaving in that little bare space, seeming no larger in the distance than the palm of the hand, some moments in their lives that could not be abandoned—moments that belonged not to France and its politicians, but to themselves and to nature; certain secret life treasures that women never abandon.

Even the poor, ugly, suffering-looking Deer Island, now that they were leaving it, had a sentimental look to them, an expression of pathos at being abandoned. The women crossed themselves and leaned forward to pat their sleeping children.

The beauty of the morning faded into the hardship of an intolerably hot day, with a burning sun overhead and a dazzling glare that blinded the eyes. The rowers turned their heads sideways to avoid it, and the sweat soaked through their shirts. The monotonous undulating line of the shore continued on the right, with the white sand beach and the dark line of forest at its back.

At midday a stop was made for breakfast and a much needed rest. The barges were brought together, the men stretching their arms and legs in relief. Great baskets were opened and loaves of brown bread with strings of smoked sausages were distributed. Jugs of wine were passed from boat to boat and drinks from them poured out

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into metal cups. The murmuring water spread coolness through the air; the soft breeze that blew from behind made itself felt. The pirogue of the chevalier slowed up to rest alongside the barge that was last in line.

Picot, with a vanity he always assumed when his master was present, busied himself with Bontemps on the seat they shared in front. He pulled out a hamper with a faint smile of satisfaction, passed to the chevalier and the ladies porcelain plates filled with cold chicken and fine white bread, while Bontemps deftly handed a silver tray bearing cut-glass goblets and a decanter of wine, and a silver corbeille filled with massepain, which might have been made in Paris, so delicate and light it was.

Madame Catherine brushed it all rudely aside. "This is no way to travel!" she scolded as she took out her own little parcel of sausage and bread and began to eat of it like the rest of the Canadians.

"Fi donc! Madame Catherine," said the chevalier, who had stepped from his pirogue and taken Bébé's seat upon the floor of the boat at the foot of the lady. "Fi donc! Refuse the good lunch offered you! You are not acting in a Christian spirit. You should take what the good God provides, and not be disdainful. When you have

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nothing but sausages and brown bread, be content with sausages and brown bread; but when Providence sends you by the unworthy hands of Picot a nice piece of roast fowl——"

"Capon, monsieur, capon!" corrected Picot in his ear.

"——a nice slice of capon and good white bread with wine and massepain, you should not show yourself ungrateful."

He forced his plate into the obstinate old woman's hands. "Look at madame here! She is giving you a good example. Shall we not, madame, give her a good example?"

In truth the lady had not touched the food, but after he had made her sip of the wine, she paid some attention to it.

"When you get to heaven, Madame Catherine, as assuredly you will, if there is anything up there like divine justice, you are going to be tormented, just the same as the prisoners in the other place, by the sins of this life. But your sins will be the good things of life that you did not enjoy: not the bad deeds you have committed. And you will get no credit for disdaining this good lunch and refusing a glass of wine and a piece of massepain!"

He lifted up the piece from his plate. "The New World has never seen such massepain, I war-

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rant. Don't you love cake, madame?"—to the lady. "I adore it. When I was a child my parents had the delicious idea of giving me nothing but cake to eat for a whole day, to punish me for gluttony. I shall never forget that day! I ate and ate and ate, and far from being disgusted, as my parents expected, I finished my punishment asking for more!"

Nevertheless he took his large piece of cake and slipped it to Bébé, who was crouching behind him. He took his empty plate and scrutinized the pretty coat of arms and initials on the border.

"Aah! Monsieur de Bienville furnished us our porcelain and our cut-glass, too! A good Canadian, he, Madame Catherine, who does not disdain the gifts of civilization."

"But he does not need them!" retorted Madame Catherine.

"You are reproaching me, Madame Catherine; but indeed I do not need them, either—I only want them. Monsieur de Bienville does not, in truth, seem to want anything but the honour of founding this new city of his."

He rose lightly and stepped into the pirogue alongside, which sped away to the head of the line of barges again.

The hours seemed to roll by quicker now, and with more life. The monotonous shore-line seemed

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to come nearer and offer more variety to the eye; the sun was beginning its descent to the west; and the rippling water cooled the air.

The boats began to turn shoreward; the oars striking the water quicker and more eagerly. The rounding of a bay seemed to advance to meet them. The pirogue, ahead, entered it and the barges followed. The forest here came down close to the edge of the water.

On reaching the shallow water, the oarsmen jumped out and drew their barges to a landing-place made of pirogues covered with split saplings.

The chevalier gave his hand to Madame Catherine, who did not take it, but stepped out of the boat, and walked the unsteady length of the landing-place without hesitation; her charge was not so sure of her feet.

An Indian camp could be seen within the forest. Warriors and squaws and children peeped from behind trees at the travellers. Fires were lighted on the beach and pots hung over them for the cooking of dinner; and the grateful savour of frying fish soon filled the air; hungry men and women grouped themselves around. As the pots were being lifted from the fire they shoved their plates forward, and seizing bread from the open baskets, began to eat at once, filling their cups from the demijohns of wine that stood within reach.

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Picot and Bontemps, after spreading their armfuls of cushions and deerskins on a little hillock somewhat apart, retired with their hampers into the concealment of the forest, where they busied themselves with their new surprises. When they emerged from it, they spread a tablecloth on the ground, and set it with plates, silver, and platters of bread and carafes of wine and water.

The chevalier, the Dame de St. Hermine, and Dame Catherine took their places around the cloth. In the centre was a great platter of the delicious fish called by the French "grognards" (croakers), fresh from the frying-pan. But Madame Catherine, catching sight of the young priest who had travelled with them in their boat sitting apart by himself, would not touch her food until she had made him come and sit by her side, where Picot had placed a plate and glass.

"And what is this, Picot?" asked the chevalier as a fresh dish was passed to him.

"Monsieur," answered Picot, with ill-concealed conceit, "this is a dinde truffé, prepared by Volage."

"Dinde truffé—prepared by Volage!" exclaimed the chevalier very much pleased. "What do you say to that, Madame Catherine?"

"As for me," she said stiffly, "I do not care for Paris food!"

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"Salad, monsieur," announced the indomitable Picot, "fresh from the spring!"

"A la bonheur!" exclaimed the no less indomitable chevalier. "Anchorites in the desert permitted themselves to eat cress, Madame Catherine! You cannot disdain that without impiety! Is it not so, monsieur?"—politely addressing the young priest, who was looking with a scared expression at his glass of wine, just poured out by Picot.

The sun went down and the little bay in front brimmed over with reflected colour like a Venetian glass. It was a moment of witching beauty.

The young priest decorously withdrew from the further temptations served to him, and finding a seat on a tree root sat there, and looked upward at the glowing sky that shone not more radiantly than his dark eyes, from the hidden radiance in his heart.

"See," said Madame Catherine, nodding toward him, "that is the way they all come out here, seeing nothing before them but God and heaven; feeling only the wish to fly upward and be with the saints and angels. He sees them. He does not see the dark forest, the deep rivers, the long tramps, the skulking Indians, the tomahawk, the stake, the torture of the devils!" She rose and went to him and sat down beside him.

The chevalier looked at her. "Madame Cath-

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erine is an envoy of God to Louisiana! As for the rest of us, I am afraid it is the devil who sends us! Listen!" The soldiers on the beach were ending up their convivialities in the usual way of soldiers by stretching out on the beach, singing with their cups of wine in their hands; the Canadians, characteristically, taking the lead with their "A la Claire Fontaine," always the first song in their repertoire.

A la claire fontaine
M'en allant promener,
Il y a longtemps que je t'aime!
Jamais je ne t'oublierai.

The chevalier joined in the pretty refrain, "Jamais, je ne t'oublierai!"

"Ah, madame, that is the way for pioneers to feel about it! As sincerely as the young priest over there feels about his saints and angels! If the Canadians go to heaven—and they are bold and brave enough to go anywhere—they will go singing, 'A la Claire Fontaine!' and they will sing it up there in the face of St. Peter, himself! Now listen to this one:

"En roulant ma boule roulant.
Derrière, chez nous y-t-un étang
En roulant ma boule roulant!

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Trois beaux canards s'en vont baignant!
En roulant ma boule roulant!
Le fils du roi s'en va chassant!
Rouli! Roulant! ma boule roulant!"

"There are thirteen verses of it—a long story; but they are not going to sing it all. This one, madame, is 'Dans les prisons de Nantes,' the favourite of the boatmen. Listen to the refrain: 'Falaron Dondi! Falaron Falirette!' How they roll it out, like running water. Every man has his song that he wants to sing. Now comes 'Petit Rocher de la Haute Montagne!' You must listen to that; it is sad."

"Petit rocher de la haute montagne!
Je viens finir ici ma campagne!
Ah, doux échos entend mes soupirs!
En languissant je vais bientot mourir!"

"Picot," he called, "tell them not to sing 'Le Juif Errant' this evening."

"Monsieur," answered Picot reproachfully, "that is not 'Le Juif Errant' they are singing; that is 'Ste. Marguerite'!" He repeated the pretty words:

"Sainte Marguerite, veillez ma petite!
Endormez ma petite enfant
Jusqu' a l'age de quinze ans!

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Quand elle aura quinze ans passé,
Il faudra la marier,
Avec un petit bonhomme,
Qui viendra de Rome!"

"Tell them to sing 'Marlbrough s'en va-t-en guerre'—that will suit everybody," insisted the chevalier.

Picot went off with his message, and gaily at once, to please Monsieur le Chevalier, the forest resounded to the full chorus of 'Mironton, mironton, mirontaine!"

"Some day, madame, they will give you a serenade and sing all their songs and you will like them. A brave people always has fine songs. Now listen to the Frenchmen. Ha!" He grew excited over the gay songs of his soldiers and for a little would have gone over to them and sung with them.

La Dame de Sainte Hermine sat silent, and from time to time he thought she sighed. The twilight had followed the sunset, and the great, brilliant, solemn stars had come out, fixing their sad gaze on the little bay. It seemed impossible not to feel sad and to sigh. "You are sad, madame."

"Monsieur, why should I not be sad?" He was sure her little hands were cold, and trembling

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as De la Chaise had remarked in his interview; and his hands longed to take them and hold them and still them; but instead, he raised them to listen. "That is my devil, Picot! I did not think he could keep quiet much longer."

From somewhere behind in the forest a thin strain of music trickled out. The thin, bright strain creeping nearer like a spark of a powder train until it reached its petard, when it exploded in a shower of gay notes. All sentiment vanished as if by magic. Men and women jumped to their feet to dance; twisting and stamping, and snapping their fingers. Picot played louder and louder, faster and faster, stepping out of the forest, kicking up his feet, swaying from side to side. All knew what the call meant. In a moment he had them stringing out behind him, joining hands and catching on to his coat-tail, prancing and kicking up their feet, just as he did.

Up and down the beach, around the cooking fires, in and out of the gloomy forest of oaks and cedars, cutting in closer and closer to his master and the French lady, Picot led them like fluttering shadows in the starlight, playing louder and louder and faster and faster as if the devil possessed him, until even the young Indian girls, in complete forgetfulness of their grim young bucks, flew after him to catch hands, too; with their plaits flying

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out behind them, their thin legs shooting up in the air.

When the fiddle stopped, the dancers fell to the ground, exhausted, the women creeping off to the shelters prepared for them, while the sergeant called the roll and marched the men off to their duties for the night.

"We sleep here, Dame Catherine?" asked the lady, looking around the dim little tent to which they had been conducted.

"Yes, madame, we sleep here."

In the obscurity the lady could distinguish nothing but two couches made from green boughs laid on the earth covered with deerskins.

"But there are no doors; any one may enter!"

"But no one wants to enter, madame," responded Madame Catherine, already stretched out on her couch.

"I hope so, Dame Catherine; but thieves——"

"In France, yes; but not in America—not in Louisiana. We don't need doors and locks; we just go to bed."

The lady was kneeling in her corner saying her prayers, which she noticed Dame Catherine omitted. She jumped up at a terrible thought: "Oh, but Dame Catherine—the animals, and bears and lions, the tigers, and oh, I forget the names of all of them!"

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"They all go to sleep here at night," answered Dame Catherine composedly.

The lady jumped up again from her knees. "Dame Catherine! I could feel something moving!"

"It is nothing; go to bed and go to sleep."

"Dame Catherine, how can one sleep with all those big trees so close, outside in the dark? I am afraid of them!"

"Afraid of trees? Bah!"

Instead of going to her own bed, she lay down close to Madame Catherine in hers.

"Ah, what is that? My God, what is that?"—as the hoot of an owl broke the heavy stillness from a tree just overhead.

"That is an owl. They always talk to one another at night."

"What a horrible language!"

"It is the only one they have, madame."

"Dame Catherine, suppose one of those horrible Indians should creep into our tent!"

Dame Catherine did not answer.

"But suppose, Dame Catherine! How fearful that would be!"

No answer.

"Oh, but! Dame Catherine!"

The old woman raised herself up with determination and called out, "Picot!"

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"Dame Catherine?" Picot's head was thrust in the opening of the tent.

"Picot, my boy, will you bring me a jug of fresh water from the spring?"

In an instant he handed it to her.

"Picot, where is Bontemps?"

"He is outside the tent with me."

"And Monsieur le Chevalier?"

"He is on watch by the boats."

"And the rest of the men?"

"They are all on guard around the camp, Madame Catherine."

"Well, then, Picot, tell the chevalier good-night for us and say we feel safe and comfortable and are going to sleep."

"Yes, Dame Catherine; bon soir et bonne nuit!" answered Picot, disappearing into the darkness again.

"Bonne nuit, my friend! Now, madame, you can go to sleep in all confidence."

"Oh, Dame Catherine, I shall never go to sleep this way, in the great forest!"

Catherine placed an arm around the frightened lady until the fatigue of the long day overcame her, and she fell asleep suddenly and soundly; and then the old woman, arising softly, took her gun from the floor beside her and went outside and joined in the watch.

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Before daylight the lady was waked from her sound sleep to drink a cup of smoking chocolate, brought by the wonderful Picot.

"Chocolate, chocolate!" she exclaimed, almost joyfully.

The barges were loaded and rowed away in the order of the day before; the chevalier again leading the way in his pirogue, the Indians crowding the shore in friendly curiosity. The end of the journey was now in sight. At the end of the day men and women talked of the new homes awaiting them in the city they were going to found; where each married man had been given a plot of ground with a cabin on it, on condition that he would make a home, cultivate a garden, and raise a family.

The lady in the stern seat listened wistfully to their hopes and plans.

"And where do we go, Madame Catherine?"

"Monsieur Bienville has given us a house and lot, also."

"We can cultivate a garden too."

"We can do what we can, madame."

The boats followed, as the day before, the gently curving line of a low coast, which sometimes bore a growth of trees, sometimes only a waving covering of tall, rank grass; passing little islands that floated like water-lilies on the surface of the blue

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water. At noon they stopped for their meal at a narrow strait of water between two lakes, in which the current ran like a mill-race. The "Rigolets," it was called by the boatmen. The pirogue ahead rocked and shook in the rough little torrent as if it would capsize. The Indians stood up at their paddles and went cautiously. "Ah, my God!" exclaimed the lady in fright. But the heavily laden barges went through easily and steadily, entering a placid little lake, beyond whose green, shores could be seen encircling it like the setting of a round stone. A jutting, grass-covered point thrust itself out from the bank they were approaching. "Pointe aux Herbes," the boatmen called it. And then still a short row alongside green banks, and they entered the opening of the little bayou that led to the portage that, in old days, had been revealed to Iberville and Bienville on their first voyage.

It was early in the afternoon when the boats began to glide over the smooth water of the little stream lying between low green banks, studded with oak and cypress trees heavily hung with moss. "Look! Look, madame," one of the women called out, "we are getting near home."

"Home! Home!" echoed a faint voice. "Catherine, is it to be my home?"

The bayou was a pretty one before their eyes.

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The water was slow and languid. The trees crossed their branches, from which dangled an infinity of green tendrils. Vines hung from tall branches, dropping to the ground, where they took root and mounted the trees again. The water was clear, and through it little fish, perch and minnows, could be seen busily feeding. On every possible place for their bodies, turtles lay still, dreamily, basking in the rays of the sun. Now and then a great alligator could be seen greedily watching for prey. When the water became too shallow for the barges, they drew up to a landing in front of a straggling Indian village as stagnant in appearance as the bayou.

A holla! brought out the Indians, who unloaded the boats, and, packing the luggage on their backs, started at once in a jog-trot to carry it along the portage to the new settlement. The soldiers followed smartly, with fife and drum playing their liveliest. The women and children in their heavy sabots, carrying baskets and shawls knotted at the corners, and overbulging parcels, came at the end.

The lady, Catherine, and the chevalier remained standing aside together while their barge was being unloaded, and the luggage packed off by the Indians. The two women started to follow in their turn; the chevalier held them back.

"No, madame, you cannot walk the distance.

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We have no carriage, but you can go in this!" And with all the grace in the world, as if it were a fine carriage, he led her to the great wooden chair that she had sat in at Biloxi, with all the cushions in place and a skin rug over them.

"But I can walk, Monsieur le Chevalier, I can walk!"

"Pardon, madame, but Monsieur de Bienville has arranged for you to be carried."

As soon as she was seated, two stalwart Canadians took up the chair, and proceeded down the path, in stolid indifference to her protests and exclamations.

The chevalier and the old woman walked beside her; behind them came Picot and Bontemps, and after them Bébé, the young Indian girl, carrying her bundle in the fashion of squaws, by a band over her forehead, her moccasined feet pressing lightly in the soft mud of the path.

It was a very narrow path, hollowed by the passing of innumerable feet. It twisted and turned with the bayou, sometimes dipping into the stream, but still ran on.

The chevalier with his sword pushed the branches aside from over the chair, which swayed and rocked at times like the pirogue in the Rigolets.

"Shut your eyes, madame, for a little while until we get there. We are not far away."

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The path widened into a road, broadened for the passage of wagons, and walk became easier. Ahead could be heard the voices of the rest of the party, gaily talking and laughing, in the manner of the French, making light of their hardships.

"Ah!" exclaimed the chevalier.

"Hum!" snorted Madame Catherine.

They were reaching a slight ridge of earth, covered with fine light green grass from the top of which could be seen a broad pasture, studded with branching trees.

"Look, madame!" The chevalier pointed at it with his sword. "It looks like France, does it not? And see a château, a real château!" It did in truth look like a château, the great square brick house with round pillars, not of rough timber, but painted as in civilized countries.

"It was no fool that chose this concession!" Madame Catherine spoke sharply, while her keen eyes looked at the château, the pasture, the cattle, and the brick-kiln and saw-mill at a convenient distance from the high road.

The road separated here and formed two roads; they took the one that led straight to the clearing ahead, passing many little concessions, laid off as farms with fields planted and cattle in the pastures.

"At last!" called out the exuberant chevalier.

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"At last, madame, we are arrived, and you may rejoice. Your troubles are all over. There is Bienville's famous city!"

Madame Catherine raised her head with spirit, to retort. Bienville's city was her city, too, and she did not propose to let the chevalier forget it.

"Bienville knows what he is doing, Monsieur le Chevalier, as the fools in France will find out some day. I wonder why God sends only fools to govern France!"

"And only wise men to serve them," added the chevalier. "But see, there is our wise man coming to meet us!"

Bienville in his usual sober raiment, his pale face graver than ever, waited for them at the side of the road, and walked with them to the clearing, a square opening in the forest by the side of a great yellow river that flowed past in majestic grandeur; a river so wide and so swift of current, so gigantic in size and strength, that words failed from sheer weakness to express what the sight of it meant. The little formless embryo of a city lay beside it.

Madame Catherine, who had never seen the city, forgot at sight of it her carefully maintained formality before the governor; smiled up at him as if he were still a babe in her arms. "You have chosen well, mon petit!"

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Bienville, cold and impervious to flattery, was as proud of her commendation as if he were indeed the little boy she had petted in Montreal. He walked close to her and, taking her arm affectionately, pointed out as they went along what shape and form his baby city was to take, as it grew. The Place d'Armes, a stretch of cleared land, lay in front of the river. Commanding it stood the little wooden building of a church, looking very small and insignificant; back of it, the small enclosure reserved for a cemetery, with a tall cross in the centre, but happily nothing else in it as yet. To the left, on the bank of the river, stood the barracks, and the "Hôtel du Gouvernement," the house of the government distinguished by its tall dovecot.

As Bienville had it in his head during the long years of his station in Louisiana, so now it was laid out by the royal engineers sent from France.

The streets started out from the Place d'Armes, running to the upper and lower limits of the settlement. The great name of the city and the high-sounding names of the royal streets existed as yet only on the maps of the engineers. Along each side of the streets were the homes of the settlers, little cabins of three rooms, raised from the ground on cypress supports with a gallery running in front the length of the building. Behind each was the

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generous portion of ground allotted for a yard, where had been left some of the old forest trees for shade. Men were still busy at work felling trees and splitting logs.

Through the open doors and windows of the cabins could be seen the colonists from Biloxi unpacking their bundles, and making up their beds.

The governor opened the door of Catherine's home, where he himself had seen the furniture placed. Bébé was standing in one room, Picot and Bontemps were setting a table in another. A cook in white cap and apron stood to one side. "Filigrane himself," said the serious Bienville, "has prepared our dinner."

When Madame Catherine saw the soup-tureen on the table and smelt the savour of the potage, like the good Canadian she was, she remembered the young priest and sent Picot for him at the presbytery, where but a frugal repast was before him.

Fish and fowl and a roast and little birds broiled over the coals, and cream and cakes, were offered to the measure of the appetite that came to them. And wine, wine was not lacking; good Burgundy and champagne, of which the officers in the barracks maintained a store sufficient for all emergencies.

"Pardi!" said Madame Catherine, when she had

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satisfied her appetite and was relaxing her stiff attitude, "but this is a good beginning for a baby city!"

"We will drink to its health," called out the chevalier. "Long life, honour, and happiness! And always a Filigrane on hand to provide for us!"

"Come, Catherine, your good wish!"

"My wish is for peace and good conduct and a good conscience for all; and always a good priest to provide us with a good example!"—with a friendly nod to the young priest overwhelmed with the publicity that she had thrust upon him.

No whit abashed at the old woman's implied rebuke to him, the chevalier whispered to the lady: "Filigrane, God knows why, as our pious Catherine would say, has come to Louisiana under the blow of domestic infelicity. He was a great artist in sauces in Paris, hence his name. Bienville can give his city life and a name, but Filigrane only, as you may judge, will give it the poetry of good living; and he will produce our gastronomes for the future." And he added, "What is a city without good cooks?"

The party walked through the house and stood upon the gallery that opened into the yard. It was crowded against a magnificent magnolia tree, that the wood-cutters had spared for its beauty and noble proportions. It towered above the roof; and

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bore still a few of its summer blossoms which shone among the glossy green branches like alabaster lamps. Under its shade, close to the gallery rail, had been built a low bench and a table.

"This, madame," said the quick-witted chevalier, "is your boudoir, prepared by our thoughtful governor."

Bienville looked away, embarrassed, for it was he, in truth, who had thought of this pretty adjunct to the pleasure of his prisoner.

The young priest at Madame Catherine's side paid no attention to the governor's pretty idea, but fixed his glowing eyes with fervour on the cross of the church.

"It is a fine thing," he spoke in an undertone to his friend, "to plant a cross in a new country, in a new city! God surely must be pleased when He looks down and sees His symbol among us! We are perhaps looking on what may in the future be a great and prosperous city, rich and powerful; when that little church will be a cathedral and its cross a lighthouse for religion! Let us go over to the church," he added shyly, "and say a prayer for the city that is to be, that it may be shielded from the wiles of the tempter, when we are all laid to rest over there"—glancing toward the cemetery.

The chevalier, who on account of his prejudices would not look in that direction, stood aside for

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the pious ones to pass, and while they crossed the muddy road to the church, he briskly turned and took his way in the opposite and pleasanter direction of the barracks, where in the officers' quarters a festival banquet was to take place with Bienville at the head of the board, and plentiful libation was to be made to the name of the new city.

As night descended shouts, laughter, and the noise of drinking and singing fell into the dark space outside.

"La Nouvelle Orléans! La Nouvelle Orléans!" the soft, musical name rose up in the air to be caught and repeated by the soldiers in their quarters, following as they always did in the wake of the dissipations of their officers. "Vive la Nouvelle Orléans!"

The sailors on the ships lying in the river took up the cry and sped it on the river, whose currents bore it in triumph to the Gulf, where it could not be doubted the great spirits of La Salle and Iberville and—who knows?—maybe also the royal spirit of Louis XIV himself were hovering in expectation of this announcement to the world of God's purpose to set on high in the New World the white lilies of France and the name and domination of His good knight and leal servant, St. Louis!

"That is the way, that is the way!" grumbled Madame Catherine; "they think to please God

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drinking, shouting, making a frolic, right in the face of His church! That was not the way at Ville Marie, which is now called Montreal, the royal city! Prayers and hymns and the services of the church there! No frolicking and drinking. An army of God does not rise out of frolicking, but a city of the devil! Yes!"

Marie Alorge, who was most piously minded, looked shocked and grieved at the prediction, and she fell asleep with an intercession to the power in watch over the destinies of the new city, to shield it from the wiles of the tempter to merriment and jollity.

The next morning saw her and Madame Catherine, the prophetess of woe, standing with the chevalier on the little gallery looking out over the ground that was to be transformed into a garden. In the far line of the picket fence that bounded their enclosure stood a pair of cypress trees, melancholy and forlorn, as they always appear when out of their native swamp.

"A fig tree over there," suggested the chevalier, whose handsome face betrayed none of the effects of his devotions, the night before, at the shrine of the all evil.

"A fig tree; yes, we must have a fig tree," agreed Madame Catherine.

"And we must plant flowers everywhere," added

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the chevalier, looking around, "and vines to run over the fences and hide them."

"I have heard," Catherine added her damper, "that flowers will not grow in the neighbourhood of trees."

"Flowers grow anywhere that ladies wish," he answered gallantly. "Would you not like to plant flowers, madame? Roses and lilies and pinks from France?"

"Yes, yes!" she responded, "if they will grow."

"We must have chickens," said Madame Catherine decidedly. "Look at those chickens over there!"—pointing to the next concession, where chickens were running about and clucking.

"Of course, chickens! Picot," called the chevalier, "go and see if you can find a hen and brood of chickens for me."

While they were still looking around, Picot returned with a basket holding a fine hen and chickens. He proceeded to let them out on the ground.

"No, no!" commanded Madame Catherine captiously, "they must have a coop to sleep in at night!"

"They can sleep in the house tonight!"

"Not in my house!"

"As you say," said Picot; "I will make a coop at once."

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The quick eye of the chevalier caught sight of a cow in the distance.

"We must have a cow, too," he said.

"And a horse and carriage, too, and a coachman?" asked Madame Catherine mockingly.

"Why not? Monsieur de Bienville has ordered one from Martinique for himself. He does always what is right, you know!"—returning mockery for mockery.

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CHAPTER VI

A SHIP from France had come up the river and landed at the wharf by daylight.

As Marie Alorge sat upon the bench provided for her by the timid kindness of Bienville, she felt a pull at her dress that roused her from her thoughts. It was Jacquot, who without a word pulled a letter out of the bosom of his shirt and gave it to her, and then slipped away as silently as he had come. Marie Alorge's hands trembled as she looked at the handwriting. She laid her face upon the paper, before she could open it and then as the tears ran down she read:

Now God and the blessed Virgin and all the saints be praised! My child, my blessed one, is alive, is safe! God has carried her across the ocean even as His blessed son walked on the waves! The little boy has found me; he has told me all; I clasped him in my arms; I kissed him! He gave me the little handkerchief. I knew it well. I shall keep it in my bosom where your sweet head used to rest over my heart, my precious one!

When you were pulled away out of my arms, and thrust into the chaise, that drove away with galloping horses, I went straight to that fiend, that hell's son you were married to, lying in his bed.

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"What are you doing to that child?" I screamed.

"My father is sending her to her punishment."

"Now God punish you, Raymond de St. Hermine, if any harm come to her." I told him much more; and he took a big stick lying near his hand and raised it. But I raised my stick, and old woman as I am I felt that I could give him such a blow across his face that he would feel. But he did not tell me where you were to be sent; and I went away and fell on my knees before the picture of the blessed Virgin Mother and I wept. I could not pray; I wept and wept and She understood that I could only weep. Then Jean came up behind me and touched me on the shoulder. He is a great rascal, I believe, and a cut-throat; but now he spoke like a Christian.

"Dame Martine, I can tell you what he has done. You know he always has his pockets stuffed full of lettres de cachet, to use them against his enemies. He thinks that your young lady called in the young man to kill her husband, and that she had led him into a 'guet-apens.' She is to him a murderess and he wanted to send her to the gallows, but instead, he put her name in one of his lettres de cachet, and took her off to St. Malo, where a ship is always waiting to sail. She is sent to America, where so many young women have been sent already."

"But my God, Jean Louche! Send that child all by herself on a ship! She will die, she will die"—and I wept more than ever.

But Jean told me to get a box ready with your clothes and he would take it to St. Malo himself and put it on a ship that he knew and so you would have some comfort over there.

Which I have done, my poor child! I have put in everything you cared for, and I paid Jean to take it to the ship, which he did and returned before your

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uncle came back. He has put me out of the house, but I did not care!

And so God and the Blessed Virgin have watched over you, my angel, and they will watch over you! You have already found friends. Keep up your courage, my child. Your uncle is old, he cannot live much longer; and then you can return to your home, your property, and to your old nurse. God will keep me alive for that. I will be here waiting for you; if not, I shall watch over you from paradise where the good are reunited.

Good-bye! My precious child!

Your old nurse and foster mother,

MARTINE BOTTO.

This letter was written for me by M. le Curé, who will also pray for you.

It was countersigned with a cross and his name, "Frère Jacques," and written under, "God bless you, my child!"

De la Chaise, like other men, had gained his reputation for omniscience at the expense of eternal vigilance and never-ceasing wisdom. And in the colony to which he had been sent, as the head of the Superior Council, there was in truth no power superior to him, except his wife, the noble lady, Marguerite de Cailly, a descendant, as she was fond of boasting to her ignorant intimates, of Jeanne d'Arc. She was omniscient, too, in her way, about the affairs of her husband, whose powers of deception she taxed to the utmost, and not infrequently thwarted.

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Before the day was over De la Chaise was able to tell Bienville about the letter brought by Jacquot and give him the news it contained.

"But how?" asked Bienville, who possessed only the poor, miserable omniscience needed in savage warfare.

"I have read the letter," said De la Chaise.

"How?" again asked Bienville.

"I saw the Dame de Sainte Hermine, and she allowed me to read it and take notes from it. The trunk alluded to in the letter must be in the house by this time."

"Do you know what was in the trunk?" was the subtle question of Bienville.

"Not yet," was the subtle reply of the courteous councillor.

Bienville looked at him as he looked at the Indians who tried to fool him; and De la Chaise gave him a little morsel more of the truth.

"I suppose we will have to act if the old uncle dies, as he seems about to do."

"Yes, he will be out of the way," said the practical Bienville. "But the husband? The old woman said nothing about his health. If he lives?"

The councillor shrugged his shoulders. "There is no telling, but we must be on our guard."

If the husband came to the colony, Bienville would know how to act, of that he was certain.

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But this he did not confide to any one, and least of all to the self-confident De la Chaise, for he had his subtlety as well as the lord high commissioner, to whom he was so immeasurably inferior.

"We must be careful," warned De la Chaise.

"Of course," was the answer of the Canadian, who never in his life had known the pleasure of acting or speaking carelessly.

"I am going to write to France at once for more information, now that I have some names to act on. It will do us no good to have De Loubois know of our plans;" but seeing the hints were lost on the dense mind of the governor, he added, "Tell him, if you choose, of the letter, but not of its contents."

Therefore Bienville told his friend only of his inability to understand the councillor's mind.

"My dear friend," answered De Loubois, "we poor mortals cannot vie with a man so near to being a priest as Monseigneur. Madame de la Chaise is well inspired to watch him. God himself would have trouble to follow his mind in its twistings and turnings. They say he is more afraid of madame than of God!"

"Who says that?" asked Bienville tartly.

"Oh, I get it from the eyes and tongues of the colony; the officers of the garrison—the devil knows how they pick it up. She does not believe a word

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he says!" and De Loubois laughed with the gusto of an unmarried man over the torments of the married. "If she were prettier or more attractive," he added, "could we doubt——"

"What?" asked Bienville sharply.

"I leave that to your imagination, my friend!"

But Bienville had no imagination, as his friend knew, but only (in his judgment) the poor substitute of a clean conscience and a heart that knew no other guile than was necessary to frustrate in cunning the simple wiles of the Indians.

When the chevalier sought the lady next morning, he found her in her gallery boudoir, embroidering. He picked up a little footstool and sat at her feet.

"Marie Alorge! Marie Alorge!" he repeated in his low, musical voice.

"How did you know my name?"

"The angels may have whispered it to me in my dreams! The beautiful stars overhead may have repeated it to me! The birds in the air have sung it to me! But, in truth, none of these told it to me; but this!" He lightly picked up from her lap her handkerchief, where, as was the fashion, the name, written in fine flowing letters, was embroidered.

"Ah, madame, think what it is to live ten years without seeing the hand of a lady!" And he took

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her long, delicate hand in his own brown strong fingers.

"The hand of a lady, fitted only for embroidering or drawing or to hold flowers! Not for use!" He pressed his lips to it respectfully. "Receive my homage, O queen of hands! So haughty, so delicate, so disdainful of admiration!"

She was dressed in a gown of white cotton cloth sprinkled over with tiny pale blue flowers, with a full white frill around the open neck.

"Ladies should wear only dresses with flowers scattered over them. There should be an ordinance to that effect 'de part le roi.' And they should wear frills around the neck, always!"

"You are poetical, monsieur!"

"No, I am not poetical; it is you who are poetical in that dress and it is not a reproach, like yours to me. The poetry of men is the prose of ladies, and their dresses——" He paused and then continued: "My mother had a dress something like yours, but it was sprinkled all over with little green leaves, and it had a frill around the neck, too. That is the way I remember her always. She made the ruffles herself, embroidered them, just as you are doing, with her work-box beside; her 'nécessaire,' she called it. It was filled with all sorts of pretty things, a needle-case, scissors, and thread and wax, and a pretty little instrument

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—a 'poinçon,' she called it—with which she made little holes in her scallops; it had a gold handle and an ivory point.

"When I would take them all out and mix them up to play with them, she would tap my head with her thimble. 'Let that alone, "polisson!" Go and play with the boys, do not meddle with a lady's nécessaire!' Just as you would say, madame, if I played with the pretty things of your nécessaire!"

She raised her eyes to look at him, and he looked again the mischievous, bright-eyed little boy that he must have been; handsome and full of play.

"But I have no nécessaire, monsieur; I had one in France but my——" She interrupted herself, for she also had been warned by the councillor, on his visit, to be careful.

"And you can embroider without a nécessaire? To make pretty frills a nécessaire is not necessary for you!" And he laughed at his pleasantry, the gay, pretty laugh of a child.

"Tell me about your mother, chevalier, and your father."

"My mother, she writes to me once a month. She has a great many children; six sons and four daughters. I was the youngest of her sons. She was young, beautiful, and pious, and a great lover of children, as you may imagine. My father, oh, he was a grey cat of another colour! He was a

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great strong countryman, fond of riding and hunting, but not fond of children. He held a strict hand over us; he made us behave by the power of the switch. He did not care whether we were good, but we had to behave like French noblemen and ladies.

"My mother wanted me to be a priest—of course all mothers want the youngest son to be a priest. If she had had her way, I might be here preaching to you and hearing your confession. But when she spoke of it, my father fell into a rage and packed me off straight to the army to make a soldier of me like my brothers, all five of them. And here I am, as you see, instead of being a priest and hearing your confession. If I had been a priest, that would have been my vocation—hearing the confessions of ladies. Would you have confessed to me, madame?"

"And your mother, have you a picture?"

"It never leaves me, the picture of my mother, my lady-love, my only lady-love!" he repeated and, slipping his fingers within the ruffles of his shirt, he drew out a black ribbon with a miniature hanging to it; the picture of a young woman with fair locks and beautiful eyes, that one divined to be blue, and an expression of great sweetness. The ruffle that fell away from her smooth neck was in truth embroidered in scallops, and though the dress

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seemed white, sharp eyes could discern the green leaves sprinkled over it.

"In truth, you resemble her."

"Ah, madame, no; I might if I were different, but unfortunately God did not create me a saint as He did her. And you, madame, will you not show me the picture of your mother?"

She drew out from her bosom a long fine gold chain and let him look at the miniature it carried.

"I never knew my mother!"

"I—I would say you are your mother, so much alike, so perfectly like her!" He looked earnestly at the pictured face of apparently a young girl, with clustering ringlets of black hair, with fine, delicate features, and (the sure quality of miniatures) very large eyes of exquisite loveliness.

"She was not made to live!" he said in a low voice. "Such loveliness would be out of place on earth! Ah, madame, she is the poetry of humanity!"

"She was blessed to die young!" sighed the daughter.

"You think so? It seems to me, on the contrary, that if the most perfect and beautiful women were allowed to live, the world would not need so many priests. Men—in truth I do not admire men who pray to God to keep their eyes blind and their ears deaf and their minds stupid to preserve them from temptation!"

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She arose.

"I offend you, madame? Perhaps you admire the priests, perhaps you would wish me to be a priest, like my mother wanted?" He laid his hand on her skirt to detain her, but the white muslin would not stay, but with its little blue flowers passed out of his fingers.

The lady wrote again to her old nurse and confided the letter to Jacquot; but on his return to the colony he brought no answer from her. He had not seen her. She was dead. Monsieur de la Chaise received the same answer to his inquiry, with the additional information that the uncle also had passed away suddenly.

"In truth," said the lady to Dame Catherine, "I never expected to see her again. I felt that such was not the purpose of God"—falling into the old conventional expression—"but she was the only mother I ever had, and I am sure she died from her sorrow about me."

When the afternoon came she was still in thought with the good nurse who had gone. She joined with Catherine on the gallery bench, and there later the chevalier joined them. From the street outside, they could hear the pleasant chatterers, sitting on their steps and passing on the one to the other the news of the day. Like the good French seed planted in the soil of their gardens they (good French seed themselves) having taken root were

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promptly putting out their leaves; that is to say, growing into the good French custom of laughing and talking and spreading gaiety around them—talking, if need be, about nothing, the best material to laugh over.

The moon rose before twilight ended, shining through the branches of the great, sheltering magnolia tree, and falling in silvery tissue upon the ground. Out beyond the fence, over the little cabins and beyond them, over the forest in the distance, the same light, soft and mysterious silver tissue of light fell.

"The moon is even more beautiful here than in France!" spoke the chevalier, "and there it has such noble sites to fall upon—castles, palaces, beautiful fields of green, and rivers with banks bordered with drooping willow, and ripples running under the arches of stone bridges. But no one cares to look at the moonlight there!" he continued lightly. "Too many fine things to look at. The king, the court, the beautiful women, the splendid men in their unifoms covered with gold stars and braid! Even love disdains the moonlight over there; it can get along without it. Here we have only forests and the great river and the Indians. They make up our noble views here!"

"I have never been to Paris," the lady answered plaintively, "and I have never seen your noble

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sights there. The moon in France shone on our convent walls and we were forbidden to look out of the window at it! At my home it shone on the rugged walls of our old château and beyond on the moat that encircled them, and on a long white road that ran far into the distance between two rows of slender trees." She seemed to be on the point of continuing her reminiscences, but arrested herself. "That is what I saw from my window, when I looked at the moon."

"Oh, I can see you looking out!" The quick ear of the chevalier caught the sadness in her tone. "I can see you at your window, standing like the lonely damozel of the troubadour, who steals under the walls of the château to catch a sight of you, and to send up a song to you; perhaps trying to mount heights to reach you so far above him—so white, so pure, so beautiful, so full of dreams——"

Madame Catherine had heard enough, and showed it by rising brusquely and taking her charge with her into the house, without excuse or explanation.

The chevalier had no choice but to leave. By the time he reached the next street, Marie Alorge was looking out of a little side window at the moonlight.

"In truth," she said, "I never noticed the moonlight before. It is very beautiful. You know,

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Catherine, I am afraid of everything here. Even the moonlight frightens me and—those terrible great trees out there. Look at them; they look so angry and solemn, as if they would like to walk over us and crush us. They hate us, I suppose, for what we have done to them. Don't you think so, Dame Catherine?"

"In France the trees may be like that, but not here in Louisiana. The trees are Christian here like we are and only do what God approves!"

"Yes, yes!" The childish voice was very tired. "I am foolish, but I am thinking all the time about my nurse—the world seems very empty and sad without her——" And she went to bed.

The older woman slipped out of her bed to come and sit beside her and pat her on the shoulder.

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CHAPTER VII

THE following week, while the Dame de Sainte Hermine sat on her little gallery bench, looking listlessly at the ugly spaces of her life or perhaps only at the blue sky above, the magnolia leaves with their pure white blooms standing up like communion cups, in the prayer book, a little gate swung on its wicket at the far end of the enclosure, and a woman entered and walked timidly toward the gallery. She wore a black apron and white peasant cap.

"Pardon, madame," she said shyly, when near enough to address the lady on the gallery. "Madame Catherine gave me permission to approach you and make a request of you, which is, madame"—blushing and speaking with a visible effort—"that you write a letter for me to my father in France."

"Who are you?"

"I—I am in truth nobody, madame; but I want to write to my father in France, and I cannot write myself, and I live over there"—pointing to the adjoining lot—"with my husband."

"And you do not know how to write?"

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"Hélas! No, madame, it was not the will of the good God that I should learn, even my letters!"

She was so humble and timid, and it was impossible not to remark that she was rather small, with a plain, heavy figure and a face to correspond; that is, with a thick yellow skin and the plainest of features. Her light hair was parted and combed down over her cheeks and hung in two long plaits behind; her eyes were blue and truthful in expression.

"I have had it in my heart to write to my father ever since I arrived here, but in truth I never could do it! I must tell him that I pardon him, and I cannot do it without telling him all—all!"

"I will get paper and pen and then you can tell me what you want to say."

"Here, madame, is your pen and paper. Madame Catherine gave them to me to bring to you and she told me to tell you all—all!"

"First we will write the letter," said the lady, and began at once.

"Tell him not to think I have any feeling against him; in my heart there is only love for him and my mother and my sisters and brothers. I pray for them every night and may God bless them and all the saints!" The quill-pen moved rapidly.

"Now let me read it to you."

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MY DEAR FATHER: Do not think, because I have not written to you, that I have forgotten you, or my dear mother, or my home. But you know I have not been able to learn to write. Please, my dear father, forgive me my negligence, which does not come from the heart, and get Monsieur le Curé to write a letter for you to me, giving me all your news.

And now let me tell you that I am well and am doing well.

"What should I say about your husband?"

"Oh, he is kind and he gives me a good home. I have found a kind husband and he has given me a good home and land for a garden. This is a beautiful country, with plenty to eat, fruit, vegetables, and game. It is not cold in the winter, but it is very hot in summer; at times there is much sickness, but I have never suffered. My husband, who is Jean Voirier, called 'le petit'; he is not as large as I am."

"Write some more, write some more!" she begged when the letter was read to her.

"How you know what I want to say? Merci, merci, madame." She rose to her feet, and stood hesitating, appealing as if for help, with her dull blue eyes.

"Your father was not kind to you?"

"Oh, that! No, madame, he has no heart for his wife and children when he gets drunk; he beats them all. My little brother is a cripple now from

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a beating!" She wiped her eyes. "Will you put in the letter that I wish my little brother was with me? I could take care of him and he would get better, running in the woods."

And then her heart seemed to push her aside, and the story that had been filling it for years, burdening it to the crushing point. It was like this:

"The family was too big for him. Every time my mother had a baby, he grew worse in temper, and beat me more cruelly. I was the eldest girl. He called me the 'idiot,' and ma foi! he was right! One day he took me from home and carried me to a convent, 'Notre Dame de Normandie,' and left me there. 'Take her,' he said to the Sister, 'before I kill her; she is an idiot and no good!'

" 'I will take her, but you seem to me a poor kind of father. It is well that God is not like you! Take care when you come before Him.'

"It was just the same at the convent as at home. They found out that I was stupid and could not learn, that I had no sense for letters; and they put me to work. I could scrub and wash and help in the kitchen; and that was the way it was for ten years! And then one day, father came to the convent and saw the Mother and talked to her; and she sent for me.

"The reverend Mother was so tall and thin and

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white that I always trembled when I came before her. But now, when I saw her talking to my father, and looking at me out of her great hollow eyes, I did not tremble.

" 'Annette,' she said, 'come here.' I knelt before her.

" 'Your father is taking you away to send you on a long, long journey. I may never see you again. But my child, do as your father says; be good and say your prayers!'

" 'Ah, reverend Mother,' I answered, bursting into tears, 'I am so stupid! I do not know my letters!'

" 'My child, you do not need to know your letters to do your duty, and that is what God asks of you to do! At the Day of Judgment, we will not be asked what we know, but what we have done! My daughter,' she said, 'the stupid have their work as well as the clever! Go and do your duty! Your father commands, I cannot refuse!'

"I began to cry and beg.

" 'My daughter,' she said, 'God will be over you. He is your real father; He knows all. You need not explain to Him, and you do not need to know your letters to be good, patient, kind, pious. You can do all that as well, if not better, than the most learned. Go, my child, and do your duty!'

"She blessed me and talked again to me, and

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after that I did not mind what my father said or did. He would not let me say good-bye to my mother or my little sisters and brothers. He was cruel to me. You see that was why I had to write to him!" she paused.

"And then, Annette, then what happened?"

"When I came back to him with my bundle packed, my father was waiting for me. He took me by the shoulders, and pushed me along until we came to a big covered cart; and he pushed me into that. It was filled with young women about my age. I had to sit on the floor. We drove all day, never stopping until we arrived at an inn, where bread was given us, and then we drove again until we came to the sea. Some one said it was St. Malo, where a big ship was waiting for us. We were ordered out of the cart, and driven up a plank to the deck and at once the ship began to move away. And so, before I knew it, I had left France forever! The two Sisters in charge of us did their best to make the young women behave themselves, but they did nothing but laugh and dance, and sing and look into the eyes of the sailors. I sat down to one side and cried, because, you see, I was leaving my home and family. I asked myself what were the homes and fathers of other girls that they could be so happy to get away from them?

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"When we got into the sea, where the waves were, the Sisters became sick and had to go to bed, and they did not get up again until we arrived. I had to go to bed, too, for like the Sisters I was seasick, too, as it is called; but every evening about sunset I came on deck where I always found some of my companions, and they told me what I did not know, that we were to be married as soon as we landed in Louisiana. That was what we were sent out for, although my father never told me. I am sure the Mother Superior knew. Oh, yes, she knew."

Annette sighed.

"The girls were crazy with delight at the idea of getting married. They talked about it all the time. It seemed to be paradise to them; but for me, I only remembered that God knew, as the Mother had told me; and that kept me brave and silent. I did not even think. God knew; that was enough for me!"

She paused again.

"Go on, Annette, go on!" the lady said impatiently.

"When we arrived at the landing there was a great ceremony. The landing was crowded with men and naked Indians, and it made me ashamed. Before we left the ship, the Sisters went around among us, and gave us great veils to cover up our faces. We must not let our faces be seen, they said,

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we were so ugly. I think it was to keep the men from seeing us, for we were ugly enough to frighten them; and I suppose they had been thinking about the wives coming to them as the girls had been thinking about their husbands; but the men thought their wives would be pretty. But what disappointments for everybody! We could not be prevented from lifting our veils and peeping at the men, and ma foi! they were as ugly as the women, and dirty and dressed in rags; not like the smart soldiers we were accustomed to in France!"

Annette sighed again and paused, but was urged forward by the lady. "Enfin, we all went to bed that night in the same big room, guarded by soldiers. The others were nervous, but I was not. I kept repeating to myself, 'God knows! He sees!' and so I slept well and was glad to get my breakfast next morning.

"But before breakfast, we went to mass at the church, all in our veils, and after breakfast we went to the Intendance, where were the governor and all his officers. Ah, they were good looking and dressed finely and we all wished for one of them!

"The Sisters delivered us to the governor, handing him a list of our names, and the curé gave him a list of the men who wanted wives; and it was easily arranged.

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"The governor read a name from one list and a name from the other, and the two stepped out and joined hands—all down the list. My name was last, and the last man was to be my husband. It seemed to me he was worse looking than all the others, but I, as you see, was not a beauty myself. He grabbed me by my hand, and we followed the last in the procession, that had to march at once to the church. All the people of the settlement were in the street to look at us, when we came from the church, and they laughed at us as if we were so many clowns at a circus.

"In the church we were all married in a group, and we all knelt together to receive the benediction and then we all went to the sacristy to sign our names. Some could write theirs, but I made my mark. Then the Sisters went around and took off our veils. Ah, that was the worst of all!

"Every man cursed his luck and so in turn did every woman; one was not more disappointed than the other. After that we went to the houses that had been provided. The men were to have a great frolic that night at the cabaret, and most of them went straight there." Here she looked up hastily at the sky.

"But it is getting late and I must go home and feed the chickens. Bon soir, madame, et bien

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merci!" She made a curtsy and turned to go, but the lady caught her by the sleeve.

"You shall not go until you tell me the rest! Here, sit down by me." And she pulled her to a seat on the bench.

"There is nothing more to tell, madame. I don't know why I told you all I did. Such things do not interest you, a lady, but only common people like me."

"No, you must tell me all! How can I write your letter for you unless I know all about you?"

"That is so, madame; good or bad, one wants to know it." And she sat down on the bench beside the lady and in her low, nasal voice went on.

"I have almost forgotten it, it is so long ago now—almost five years. You know it was when the colony was at Mobile. And it seemed so little after my leaving my home and my family!" With a finger she wiped away a tear that fell on her freckled cheek.

"Enfin! When I went into the little, new house I could hear the frolicking beginning in the cabaret, laughing and singing; from drink, you know. But there was no laughing in my heart when I shut the door and sat down and looked at my little box tied with ropes. No! Instead I cried and cried; it all seemed so black, and I wanted to go back to France!—to Normandy. And then when I had

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cried enough I got up and opened a window, and the door. It was still light and I thought it must be midnight. 'Eh, Annette,' I said to myself, 'it is still daylight. What would the Mother say to you? What would God say?'

"And I seized a broom that lay on the floor; the floor was covered with things out of place, and I began to sweep and to wipe the dust off with a rag; and I picked up the things on the floor. Oh, I worked hard and I stopped thinking, and when it was dark, good dark this time, the stars were all out, and I sat down again and I lighted a candle and there I sat, madame, until the noise in the cabaret stopped and I heard the men coming along the path. I slipped to the door and unlatched it, and went off into the farthest corner of the room and waited and waited. They were stopping first at all the houses along the way, and I heard them stop at mine, and one of them flung the door open.

"'Ha, ha! She is waiting for you—the bride! Well, here he is, madame!' And laughing and shouting they picked him up and threw him into the room. In truth, I think they must have carried him all the way." Annette shook her head sadly. "And there he lay. He could not move; his eyes were closed; he breathed like a tired dog. I brought the candle close and looked at him. I had not had time to look at him before. He was a short

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man but stout; and he was ugly, madame; all black. His hair, his beard, the hair on his hands! A drunken man, I said, and as ugly as the devil. So ugly that I trembled, but enfin! how could he help that? I was ugly, too. I knelt down by him and I unbuttoned his shirt, his dirty shirt, and I took off his shoes, and at last I made up my mind to put him to bed. Oh, I had seen my mother do that for my father often and often! I dragged him to it and I put my shoulder under his arm, and I strained and strained; and God helped me so that I could hoist him on to the bed, and I rolled him on to it; and then I undressed him and put him at his ease and covered him with a sheet. And then the sickness began, just like my father. He was sick, sick, and I was sick too. I gave him water, and I gave him water, like my mother used to do, and I wiped his face with a wet towel, and then when it was midnight, he went off to sleep.

"I went off to the farthest corner, and I lay on the floor; I was so tired! I went to sleep, too. When daylight came, I looked around, and I was glad that I had cleaned the room so nicely and put everything away in place. And then I said to myself, 'Annette, you must get something to eat,' and I went and looked around the room where the cooking was done. There I found flour and bacon and the jug of wine that the government had given each

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married couple, and I found some eggs. I made a fire and cooked the bacon and eggs, and I made a big pot of tea of some dried leaves I found. They were sassafras leaves and they make a good tea.

"And all the while he slept! My God, how he slept—and snored! When I had eaten a little, I washed my face and combed my hair and I opened my box and got out my dress and apron and cap, just as if I were at home, and I put them on. And would you believe it, madame? I began to sing one of the little songs we sing over our work at home. I sang it over and over again, as I walked around the room opening the windows to let in the air. And I went in to see my animal. He was awake, but he thought he was dreaming! 'Who are you?' he asked, his voice trembling a little; and with that I trembled, too. 'I am your wife, the girl you married yesterday.'

" 'The girl I married yesterday!' he said, swearing like a pagan. He caught hold of my sleeve.

" 'No, you must first have your breakfast,' I said, frightened to death, and I ran away and came back bringing a plate with some eggs and bacon and bread.

" 'Now stay where you are and eat it!' I commanded.

"He looked at me as if he were still in a dream, and obeyed me.

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"I brought him a cup of hot tea and he drank that!

" 'You put me to bed last night?' he asked.

"I nodded.

" 'Where did you sleep?'

"I pointed to the corner on the floor. He growled under his breath an impious oath I will not repeat.

" 'Come here, come here! What's the matter? What are you afraid of?'

"I was afraid of him and I held back.

" 'Come here! Stand there in the light, where I can see you, not behind my back.'

"I obeyed him.

" 'And now tell me the truth. What did you think when you saw your drunken husband?'

" 'I thought, well, the good God has sent me a drunken husband; that was all.'

" 'Well,' he swore again a great oath, 'well, the good God has made a mistake, if He thinks I am a drunken husband.' And with that he jumped out of bed, and I ran out of the room.

"When he came out all dressed I was sitting on the steps mending his dirty shirt, that I had taken off the night before. He came out and sat down beside me. He was not very steady on his feet and I thought he was going to fall as he sat down. He swore again against himself. 'The good

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God, the good God! What are you going to do to Him for giving you a drunken husband?'

" 'I am going to do my duty as He wants me to do it. He knows all about it. He sees all, and He is watching me to see what I am going to do!'

" 'And you think He knows what I am going to do?'

" 'Dame,' I shrugged my shoulders. I arose. 'I must go and wash this shirt, and I must clean up the house.'

"He watched me as I washed his shirt and hung it out to dry, and I went into the house and washed the plates and pots, and then I began to prepare the dinner. I put on the big pot to make the soup. Oh, I knew all about the cooking from the convent. I cut up the onions and cabbage and put in a piece of bacon, and then put it on the fire to simmer.

" 'What is your name, little one?'

" 'Annette.'

"He stumbled into the next room and lay down on the bed and soon I heard him snoring again.

"When it was midday we had dinner. I broke an egg and beat it into the soup and you may be sure it tasted good, and it smelt good," she added, with pride; "and—and that is all, madame, and bon soir, and bien merci!"

She walked away very decidedly with her letter folded carefully in her apron, and the lady did

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not stop her; but followed her with her eyes until she passed through the gate, and then, entering the house, she saw Catherine busy with some vegetables at the table. She put her hand on her shoulder and said softly, "Annette is a good woman, Dame Catherine?"

"Yes, she is a good woman," answered the Canadian, nodding her grey head.

"But it is hard to be a good woman, Dame Catherine," rejoined the lady with a sigh.

"When one is a good woman it is not hard to be good!" was the answer.

"Dame Catherine, do you know how to make a potage—that tastes good and smells good?"

"Dame, that is the only kind worth making, madame."

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CHAPTER VIII

SEPTEMBER is the worst month we have in Louisiana," commented Dame Catherine, looking from the gallery over the sky. "It is the month of storms."

"It does not look like a storm to me," said Marie Alorge, standing beside her and looking up at the sky. A cool, pleasant breeze was fanning away at the hot sun, chasing the white clouds playfully over the blue. But the playful breeze did not cool down at noon; on the contrary, it became a boisterous and rough wind. When the sun went down it was in a saffron, not a scarlet, splendour. The good people did not sit and gossip on their steps as usual; instead they went inside their cabins and shut their doors. The wind shifted from southeast to southwest, the storm wind of the Gulf, and as if the settlement were the Gulf, it blew over it with the fury of hounds chasing wild animals, shaking the little houses until their windows and doors chattered. The heavens ceased to be heavens, but looked like hell, black and cavernous.

Dame Catherine fastened the iron bars of her

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windows and doors; lighted the dark green myrtle wax candles in their tall glass chimneys, and drew out her spinning-wheel.

Marie Alorge drew her chair beside her and played with her knitting while she listened to the wind. She recognized the storm. It was the storm of the ocean that she had sailed through to the New World. But the little house was not the good ship *Aventurier*, that could override waves and hold her own against the wind. It shook and trembled as the wind shot gusts of rain through cracks of doors and windows. And the wind did not raise its voice in shrill screams of passion, as on the ocean, but growled, hoarse with fury and rage, smothering the sound of the thunder.

A clap of thunder shook the ground under the cottage while the lightning sent a sheet of fire through it. Madame Catherine put aside her spinning wheel and stood by the door steadying it with her weight.

"Are you afraid, Dame Catherine?" Marie Alorge asked, and came and stood beside her, pressing her frail weight too against the door. A steady, heavy booming now began to be heard.

"My God! Dame Catherine, what is that? What does it mean? Shooting of cannon!"

The old woman shook her head. "Trees, trees blown down by the wind."

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The thin scream of a human voice came through the door as a form bumped against it.

"For God's sake! Let me in!"

"I cannot open the door!" Catherine shouted back. "Go around to the other side of the house!"

"For God's sake, Madame Catherine! Open the door, the wind is killing me!" the woman screamed in agony, bumping her body frantically against the door.

The old woman slowly opened it the space of a crack and before the wind could take advantage of it, a woman slipped through and pushed with the other two women to hold the door while Madame Catherine dropped the heavy hook into the socket. When that was done, she could be heard, her words falling in gasps: "I was alone, my husband is away! I became afraid, and I ran and ran! I could not see my way, the rain was so thick—and the trees were falling all around me! Then—then I got here!"

Again the roar of the storm and the crashing of trees took possession of the world outside. There seemed to be no hope of their ever stopping. The women grew faint and weak against the door.

"Listen!" said the stranger. All bent their heads against the door and heard a thin, weak voice forcing itself in agony to be heard. "Let me in, for God's sake, let me in!"

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"Madame Catherine, for God's sake open and let her in!" pleaded the rescued one. "You do not know what it is outside! It is hell!" And she helped open the door; but this time the wind blew it wide open. A woman darted in, her black hair blowing wildly around her pale face, her clothing in rags from her waist; her limbs were bare. She was holding a bundle tight in her arms. She burst into loud weeping, and staggered and fell to the floor, holding her bundle still in her arms.

"L'ouragan! L'ouragan! God have mercy upon us! The water is rising everywhere, the river is coming over us!"

While Madame Catherine was struggling with the door, a man jumped into the room and, putting his shoulder to the door, closed it; he was dripping wet, and had no hat. He rushed at once to the candle and putting his hand inside the glass chimney pinched out the light—just in time. A crash on the roof and the side of the cabin was crushed in by a falling tree. "The magnolia!" he exclaimed. The floor heaved and swayed; the candlesticks were hurled into the middle of the room.

The women began to scream and ran to get out. "Be still!" he commanded.

The woman on the floor unrolled her bundle and felt it anxiously. The baby was awake and, turning lazily, put up its hand for the breast.

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A soldier pushed something through the leaves of the limb he was cutting. "Here! I found the wind blowing it around." It was a child. Madame Catherine took it in her arms. The first woman snatched it from her, screaming: "It is my child! it is my child! I dropped it when I was running," she whined, "and did not know it! It is my child."

"Here is daylight!" exclaimed the chevalier.

All started; they had forgotten the day in the long night upon them; a faint gleam of light could be discerned. After an absence of fifteen hours the sun shone upon a wrecked world. The wind began slowly to relent, the thunder growled farther away, the rain turned into showers.

"The worst is over!" proclaimed the chevalier and opened a window, calling them to look out.

The horrible spectacle! The settlement looked like a whipped woman, humiliated and degraded. Its beautiful trees were like corpses on the ground, in heaps. Here and there only was a cabin left standing; the ground was under water. The church was a pile of timber, nothing of it standing; but the brave strong government house was erect; the ships in the river had broken from their moorings and were floating like helpless derelicts, the small boats all sunk. The sullen-looking sun shone askance upon it like a repentant tyrant.

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All to be done over again!

Bienville, De la Chaise, the royal engineers, the officers of the garrison gazed about them in dismay. While they were looking and the settlers were scraping among the ruins of their homes, the priests were already at work clearing a space and building an altar in a room of the barracks, and were ready for services the next morning.

It was the top of the great magnolia that had fallen on the roof of the little house. The great branches spread all over it; the body stood shorn and bare like a truncated funereal pillar. The beautiful white flowers, unmarred by the storm, lay like white gulls amid their green leaves. The chevalier gathered an armful of them, as he chopped the débris.

"Here, madame, they have come down to us as we could not go up to them!"

Catherine was disinterring her flower and vegetable beds with a rake, and gathering up her drowned chickens in a basket.

"Do we," asked Marie Alorge timidly, "do we have such storms often? I do not think we have them like this in France!" She was still in her rumpled, crushed dress of the day before; her hair hung in long plaits.

"In France! In France"—shrugging his shoulders—"nature behaves better than here. That is

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the great glory of France, you know—behaviour! When the trees were falling everywhere, I remembered the magnolia and passed here to see, and you had candles burning! They might have set fire to the house; that is the great danger in a storm—fire!"

"Ah, monsieur, but for you!" She paused, and he did not answer. Madame Catherine came up, her apron filled with a hen and her brood.

"I found them in a corner of the fence, where she had the sense to go. She was flat on top of them, but she saved them! Here!" She handed them to Marie, who lifted her skirt to receive them. "Put them under the bed. Thank God it is still standing! And madame, I would advise you to put yourself on top of the bed!"

"Yes, yes, I am tired, I believe. It was worse even than on the ship. Were you ever in a storm at sea, monsieur?"

"I? Oh, yes, I have been in storms everywhere. They are, in truth, what God has been most generous with to me!"

"But He saved you, as He saved us last night!"

"Yes, He saved us last night, that is true; but, madame, you had better go and rest."

"Ah, monsieur, when I try to rest, I cannot rest! I think!" She shook her head. "The storm could

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have given me rest, as it did to the church. The poor little church, and our fine magnolia!"

He shook his head responsively, and spoke most seriously: "Do not ask for that rest, madame! When it comes, you have to take it; but do not ask for it! A soldier who asked for it could not fight. Life is bad, I know, but it is better than that rest! Believe——"

"I do not ask for it; I only say that last night——"

"Do not say it, do not say it." He raised his hand to stop her words. "You are too young! You do not know what life is! You do not know what life may hold of joy for you!"

Madame Catherine came running, waving her hand excitedly: "Quick, quick, send for the priest! Poor Bébé, over there! A tree on top of her!" One of the soldiers, chopping, ran at full speed.

"She was trying to get home to us! She went to spend the night with her people at the bayou! Poor child, poor child!" She hurried away again to the corner of the lot.

The chevalier followed her; at his nod the men at work followed him.

Marie covered her face with her hands, and turned away to fall on her knees, by the chair in which she had been sitting.

The chevalier returned. "Bébé has found the

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rest you wanted, madame," he said. "She has gone to the happy hunting grounds!" He took her hand and led her inside the house, beyond sight of what was going on in the corner of the fence.

The brave settlers went to work with a heart to repair the damage of the storm; dragging aside the piled-up trees and clearing premises and once more starting the city on its way.

The overflow drained back into the bayou, which was rapidly receding; the river water was turned off into ditches; sailors brought the derelict ships into port again; barges and skiffs were rescued from the swollen current carrying them out to the Gulf. But the destroyed food could not be gathered up; it was a loss not to be made good until a ship could be sent for a supply to the Islands.

Bienville at once despatched a vessel to Cuba for supplies; and soldiers were sent to the Indian villages out of reach of the storm for what food they could furnish. Indian hunters were set to work and brought in game of all kinds.

Catherine, who had lived through periods of starvation at Fort Louis, Mobile, and Biloxi, knew the dire want that was threatening them, but she could not take her mind away from Bébé, and reticent as she was on ordinary days, her thoughts forced themselves through her lips.

"She was a little baby when she was brought to

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me. The chevalier brought her wrapped in his cloak; he found her in a village that had been burned by enemies—a Choctaw village destroyed by their constant enemies, the Chickasaws. The baby had been forgotten or rather it lay under the body of its dead mother. The chevalier found it and he swore to save it. He was on an expedition with my husband. When he got well from a bad fever he took as soon as he reached the fort, my husband got permission from Bienville to take him as an apprentice, and make a coureur de bois of him. He was only fifteen, and any life was better than that of the young officers in the camp. You see," she explained, "when food grew scarce as it did, whenever the boats from France failed to come, the officers and young men—soldiers and the officers, too—used to go and live with the Indian tribes, and they enjoyed it, fishing and hunting and sitting around the camp-fire making love to the young Indian girls. And there came about so much trouble from it that Bienville was forced to stop the practice. Henri would have been glad to go with the officers, but he soon liked it better to go with my husband, and was glad to follow him on his long tramps through the woods. As my husband said, it made a man of him. And it did. He grew from a small, delicate, homesick boy of fifteen to what you see him now," she said

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with pride, "a regular coureur de bois. Oh, he knows all about the woods and the Indians as well as Bienville himself. My husband treated him just like a son, and he was just like a son to my husband.

"Let me tell you of the bad adventure they had once. They fell in with some Indians on the war-path against the French. In their surprise, before they could prevent it, they were surrounded and overpowered, and laid on the ground with arms and legs tied! My husband knew what would come next, but the boy did not. He laughed and talked and made his jokes, all the same. You see how impudent he is now, and you can know what he was then. Nothing frightened him or made him serious. That was one of the reasons my husband liked him; he laughed at everything. But after the council of the warriors, when he saw Etienne, my husband, stood up against a tree and lashed to it, and branches piled up all around him, then he understood! Etienne called to him, 'Good-bye, Henri, tell my wife.' But the savages gagged him and would not let him say another word. Henri was so young, so ignorant, so childish with his laughing and talking, that the Indians scorned him and forgot to watch him. And he was so good looking that the Indian girls brought him food.

"You see how it was; he made love to them

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and got what he wanted out of them. They undid his hands and feet and placed a knife near him. He pretended to go to sleep, and all went to sleep around him except poor Etienne, who was to be burned at daylight! Henri, he was as agile as a squirrel, managed to crawl to Etienne and cut his bonds and slipped the knife into his hands, and that was enough; in a moment they were out of the camp. But that was not all; Henri was quick enough to seize two guns standing against a tree."

The old woman paused. "Etienne would never have been killed if Henri had been with him! And when he heard it, he came and sat down by me and was as good a daughter to me as he had been a son to Etienne."

"He is very brave," said Marie Alorge.

"The chevalier? Oh, as to that, all the French are brave and all the Canadians, too. Bienville is just as brave as the chevalier, and when he was young——" But Marie Alorge seemed to have no interest in Bienville and his courage.

"Bienville wrote to the minister in France how Henri had saved the settlement, for the Indians were on their way to attack it, and the government, who cared only for the settlement and not a straw for Etienne (as Bienville knew), the government sent Henri the Cross of St. Louis, and so he became a chevalier. But I miss Bébé," said the old woman,

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returning to the starting point in her talk. "Fortunately, she made her first communion last Easter."

"Oh, she was a Catholic, then?"

"Of course; we had her baptized when she was brought to the fort, a little baby. I was her godmother, the chevalier the godfather. Seeing her running around the camp, the soldiers called her Bébé, and they would never call her by any other name; and so we all called her Bébé."

"Poor little Bébé!" said Marie Alorge. "I miss her too!"

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CHAPTER IX

HISTORY is too haughty a dame to notice the ground she walks upon. She marches along through time, her head high up in the air, crushing underfoot the small people in her path, as we crush ants. And her chronicles, piling up mountain-high, are made up of great people and great events. Undertake to search them for a small life or a small name—as well search a haystack for a needle. And the history of New Orleans is no better in this respect than the history of Rome or Paris.

After the storm, fever broke out. The settlers fell ill of it, and the little cemetery, bare and deserted for so long, filled up with graves; its little lots eating up the population of the great ones. Each little cabin had been forced to yield up a victim. Bienville had fallen ill and his life was despaired of, but he was saved out of this, as out of many a previous dangerous pass. Marie Alorge could find no ease or rest in the hot weather that makes the last weeks of September a curse, as the old city has found out by experience. She walked

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about listlessly and looked about her with dull eyes.

"I think I must be getting the fever!" she at last conceded, and went to bed as Madame Catherine told her to do, and took the tisane brought to her. She did not complain; she seemed too stupid. The garrison doctor came, but he shook his head: "Madame Catherine, I have no luck with the fever. It is the devil for maliciousness!"

"What would you advise?"

"I? I would send for that old woman doctor of the Chetimachas."

"That is what I would do," answered Catherine promptly, as if his words were already in her mind. "She has great luck, and she knows more about fevers than you doctors."

"My good woman, send for her; send for her by all means. Tell her to come at once. She can have all the sick women; I have not cured one! I am a garrison doctor; I am only good for soldiers."

"That is the God's truth," assented Catherine.

The old Indian woman trudged from her village into the settlement that afternoon, the Chetimachas living within easy reach on the other side of the river. Her heavy basket, woven of palmetto leaves, was held to her back by a broad leather strap across the forehead. She wore old worn moccasins, a short skirt of deerskin, and a short loose sacque of

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faded calico that she had bought from some trader. She did not speak to any one. She looked at her patient, felt her limbs, opened her closed eyes, and examined her tongue, and then took out of her basket her bundle of herbs.

The days passed and the fever held on in the settlement. Only a thunder-storm, it was said, would put an end to it, or a frost.

"She must go down more before she gets up," was all the Indian woman would tell Catherine.

The delicate, frail body of the lady went down in weakness to the verge, to the very verge of the end, as Catherine saw it and sent word to the governor; and he sent for the Indian doctor. On her return, she made another examination. "Must go down; must go down before she come back!"

"Will she come back?" asked Catherine.

The Indian woman would not answer. She was tying strings to the ankles and wrists of her patient.

"Maybe no; maybe yes," she said as if to herself. "If we have a storm, yes!" She went to the back door and looked up at the sky. "Soon be here," she said; and as Catherine looked the rain began to fall. The Indian woman walked away.

The day passed on with its heavy hours. Catherine watched and waited, thinking not of the poor, thin body on the bed and its heathen doctor, but of the fluttering soul and its salvation. Her worn

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old Canadian prayer beads slipped through her fingers, counting the prayers over and over again! And then she heard a soft sigh, as of an infant waking.

Marie Alorge's eyelids were opening, the heavy lashes raised for the first time; her lips tried to move. "Water!" came in a whisper. "Water!"

She lifted her eyes to Catherine and smiled. "Such a long, long sleep! I could not wake. I tried to, but I could not." And after a moment: "Catherine, I dreamed—I dreamed! It was all so beautiful! I was happy, happy." She repeated the word "happy" again and again.

The Indian left the room, which was growing dark.

"Catherine, I saw God and you and the chevalier. I was happy, happy!"

The Indian came back and bent over her, and the eyelids closed again peacefully, contentedly.

Catherine slipped noiselessly through the door, stumbling against the chevalier, who was leaning against it.

"You here, still? I told you to stay away; this is no place for you!"

"Catherine, how is she? Is she better?"

"She has opened her eyes and spoken to me. She is quiet and happy. She has been dreaming of heaven and the holy angels!"

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He shook his head. "Catherine, let me see her, only for a moment! I will not speak to her, I promise! Only let me look at her, and when she opens her eyes, maybe she will see me!"

Catherine placed herself resolutely beside him and held his arm.

"No, no, Henri, that is impossible! It will do her harm; leave her alone! She can dream of God and heaven and so—and so——" She hesitated and said no more.

"I should think," the chevalier said defiantly, "that God would be satisfied with sending her alone across the ocean and putting her to live in a barbarous place, among strangers! Now to go alone, all by herself across, away, like——" He hesitated for a word. "If I could see her, if she could see me, she might not be afraid!"

"No, no, I tell you! You are not the one for her to see! You go away and you stay away. She does not need you; she does not need any one! Now——"

"I am not going. I shall stay here as close as I can until—until—— Catherine, let me see her! You don't know, you do not understand!"

The old Canadian nodded her head; she knew and she understood, but she would not give in to him. This last moment was for God, not for him.

Turning away, she left him and went around to

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another door and entered the room. When she had left the room the lady opened her eyes. They were clear and bright, and full of peace and rest. "Water, water!" she said, and when she saw Catherine she smiled wanly. "Oh, Catherine, I have been asleep so long! But I am rested now! I dreamed—I dreamed. It was all bright around me and flowers everywhere and I felt so happy. I have never been so happy in my life before!" She closed her eyes and fell asleep again. Her face looked, indeed, happy. The old Indian woman bent over her and felt her skin, and shook her head approvingly.

"Catherine, are you there? Come close to me, Catherine. Oh, such a beautiful dream! I thought I was in heaven, and God was there, and you and—— The chevalier, where is he? I thought he was here. I saw him standing where you are; he was crying—he has been so good to me!"

"Go to sleep again, my daughter, and dream some more!" coaxed Catherine, and the gentle face fell over and the eyes closed again. As Catherine slipped through the door she stumbled over the chevalier, standing heavily against it. She put up her hand and pushed him aside. "I told you not to stay here!" she exclaimed angrily.

"And I told you I would stay here until I heard that she was better; or—or—— Let me see her,

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Catherine!" he pleaded; "just one look at her! Only for one moment, one moment! It will not hurt her, Catherine. You know—you know if she saw me, she might feel better!"

Catherine took his arm and led him away. "She is sleeping quietly and dreaming—dreaming of heaven and God and the blessed angels."

He smothered a groan. "No, Catherine, no!" And he placed himself again against the door. Catherine placed herself beside him, and held his arm.

"Listen, Henri. She is happy; she told me so!"

"Tell me the truth as God hears you. Is she going to get well? Or—or——"

Catherine shook her head doubtfully. "God only knows and that Indian woman!"

"I wanted her to see me once more! She is so young and she has had so much sorrow! I should think God would have pity on her now!"

Catherine opened the door a crack and peeped through it. "The Indian woman is preparing to go out again. I must stay with her." And she went back to her place at the bed.

The Indian woman went out into the street and walked up the levee. While she was gone, the chevalier opened the door so easily that even Catherine did not hear him, and, slipping in, he knelt down by the side of the bed. The sleeper stirred.

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"Henri, Henri!" she murmured.

Pressing his lips to the bed-covering, he arose and left the room. But this time Madame Catherine saw him.

The Indian woman put the strap on her forehead and went away, leaving Catherine in the patient's room. She walked down the street to the river, and took the path that led up the bank until she came to the limit of the clearing, where stood the governor's hotel, as it was courteously called, a two-story brick building with upper and lower gallery all around. She found Bienville sitting on the gallery in front of his door, still weak and pale from the attack of fever which he had survived, it was said, thanks to his fine Canadian constitution that had withstood not only the malady but the garrison doctor's remedies. The woman held up her hand and spoke rapidly in her own dialect. The governor answered in the same and put in her hands a roll of parchment.

She nodded without a word, returned to the river, got into her waiting pirogue, and paddled briskly away. Her arms were strong and her head held high, and her old wrinkled face wore a look of great satisfaction, like a warrior returning from a successful war party; for she was carrying back to her tribe the wampum of the governor that secured them in the possession of their land on

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the other side of the river, with protection from encroaching white settlers; the reward she had stipulated for before she would listen to his call to come and cure the white lady.

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CHAPTER X

AS the brave settlers had worked out of the disasters of the storm, so now they set themselves to work out of the disasters of the epidemic of fever.

As soon as the sick ones could rise from their beds, men and women, still weak and pale, took up again the burdens they had been forced to cast down by the fever—the burdens of their daily routine of life. Kindly nature helped them. The season that had brought affliction was followed by one that brought healing and hope. The season, in truth, was as brave, in its heart, as the French settlers were.

Even Marie Alorge had never been able to walk bravely and cheerily in the land of her exile until now. In the invigorating effect of the bright sunshine and crisp breezes she lifted up her head, and at last, forgetting what was behind her, was disposed to reach out to what was before her.

"It is so strange to feel well and strong, Dame Catherine, here, so far away from France! I do not recognize myself. I want to run; I want to do something; some work."

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Catherine nodded her wise old head. "Pardi! That is what I have been waiting for. Eh! Now you have found out you are going to live, and not, as you thought, to die. God has decided for you, you see. He has no use for people who are 'Gna-gna,'" using the colloquialism of the common people.

"Gna-gna!" Marie Alorge laughed. "What is that, Dame Catherine? It sounds like smelling something that tastes bad!"

"It means being a coward, and pretending it is from weakness!"

"Well, I hate cowards! I love brave people like Annette. I see Annette over there; I am going over to talk to her."

"Put the little chickens in their coop before you come back!"

"Yes, yes, Dame Catherine, with pleasure." She picked up the little ones on her way, calling "Pi! Pi! Pi! Pi!" gathering them in her skirt which she lifted high above her delicate ankles. "Annette, Annette!" she called out.

Annette did not hear. She was busy washing her clothes; that is, lifting them from a steaming kettle of hot water, and beating them with a paddle on a bench, singing to herself the little Breton lullaby that she used to sing to the babies at home:

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"Fais dodo, petit Pierrot!
Tu n'iras jamais à l'école!
Je t'apprendrai ce qu'il en faut!

Fais dodo, petit Pierrot,
Je te domnerai z'une belle femme!
Un beau jour t'auras des marmots!"

Her thoughts were in the old Breton farm, far, far away from Louisiana.

"Annette, you never come to ask me to write another letter!"

She heard this time and stopped her battling. "I have nothing more to write, madame!"—shaking her head. "I have told them all my news and they do not tell me theirs. They have forgotten me, that is all! And, perhaps, it is better if God wills it; but I should like to know how my mother is, and all my little sisters and brothers!" She wiped her eyes with the back of her wet hand.

"And your poor husband? Annette, what of him?"

"Poor man, he is in bed with a bad burn on his leg. The doctor said we must look out or something ugly will happen to it. He cannot move; it is all swelled and red; I have to wait on him. It is the first time in his life he has had to stay in bed. He does not know what suffering is! I wonder what he would do if he had no wife!"

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Annette smiled complacently. "He is calling me now, don't you hear him?"

"Go to him, Annette; I will go away!"

"Oh, he can wait a little, after waiting so long!" she answered sensibly. "He is only calling to find out if I am here, and to be sure he has a wife to wait on him. I am coming, I am coming!" she called out and started running toward her house, singing not the sad little lullaby but the gay ronde:

"Bergères, allons, Gai gai, Bergères, allons gaiment!"—singing out loud and clear, so that the sick man could hear her.

As Marie turned she saw the handsome figure of the chevalier behind her. He, too, was gay and humming a song.

"Tiens! Tiens! Little chickens! Do you like little chickens, madame? As for me, they do not amuse me; I find them pretty, but stupid."

"Ah, monsieur, I am not so hard to please as you! I like pretty things, even if they are stupid. And today, ma foi! I like everything! The weather is so fine and it makes me feel so strong and well!"

"After your long fever? You know we were afraid that you would not get well; that, as the priests say, God would call you to Himself!"

"I thought so, too; but you see, as Madame Catherine says, God changed His mind! I wonder why?"

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"Perhaps He has some pleasant surprise in store for you. It sometimes happens that way."

"Perhaps so; it was my good Indian doctor, I think. She was so good; she kept me sleeping all the time. And I had such beautiful dreams!" she smiled wistfully.

"You dreamed! What did you dream about, madame? When I dream, it is of Indians and fighting; being scalped; never of France or anything pleasant."

"You have so many pleasant things in your memory. Now, I——"

"Tell me what you dreamed in your fever that was so pleasant, madame," he asked courteously.

"Ah, no. A dream you tell never comes true!"

"And you want your dream to come true?"

"Yes, if God wills!"

"And if you will! You know God always wills what a woman wills."

Madame Catherine now came up with a flat, open Indian basket to receive the chickens.

"I shall take them in the house; there are too many animals around here." She tried to catch the hen that ran away from her, and they all ran after the obstinate hen, that the chevalier finally caught and gave to Madame Catherine, who walked away with the brood into her cabin.

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"And so you will not tell me your pretty dream, madame?"

"One of them was about the convent, when I made my first communion. I felt so happy, so happy! I was up in the air and I could see heaven! I forgot all about the earth. In fact I did not remember there was such a thing until I awoke!"

"The happiness of first communion! Yes, yes! That happiness, in fact, is a dream, a dream that comes true but once in life—but a boy never dreams of his first communion. That is not what a boy dreams of. No."

"What does he dream of then, chevalier?"

"Oh, of other forms of happiness—and of what else did you dream, when you had the fever?"

"Of other forms of happiness, monsieur."

He did not push her further.

"On the day I made my first communion," he spoke lightly, "I felt like a little angel, and I looked like one—a pretty little angel. But my father came along and gave me a thrashing; he had no sentiment about angelic little boys!"

"But why did he punish you?"

"Oh, not for a religious motive, you may be sure! He thrashed me because I allowed my horse to throw me; a beautiful horse that he had just given me on my birthday. I deserved it, too, madame, the whipping. A boy should never be

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thrown from his horse. It was a thing he could not forgive. And so he always thrashed me when I did not ride to suit him. I became a good cavalier. My mother"—continuing to unroll the thread of his reminiscences—"she cared not about my riding, but about other qualities. She made me recite my catechism every day, and I used to serve the altar, and I could sing Latin responses and hymns; but that gave my father no pleasure at all. On the contrary. It was always during Lent that he made me take fencing lessons under his supervision; and my poor mother, of course, who wanted me to go to church with her, had to make the sacrifice! I could have been made a priest by her, if it had not been for my father! The very idea of it put him in a temper. Whenever he suspected me of trying to be good—that is, pious—he would renew his persecutions; that is, his whippings. He detested pious men. But my mother would not yield, either; and at last one day—— But this does not interest you, madame!" he stopped.

"But it does; it does!" she exclaimed hastily. "Tell me. I want to know all about—all about——" She stopped hastily in confusion.

"At last one day we were preparing for a grand procession in the church, and I was to carry a banner or a cross, dressed all in white. My

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father fell into a furious rage; we were all frightened. He did not say anything. But one morning he ordered me to mount my horse and accompany him, and we rode off together to Paris. I had five brothers in the army; and the eldest was in the household troop of the king. He was a great, bluff man, just like my father. When he heard what my father told him, he swore a great oath and said that he would see that I should be a man and not a pale-faced priest. And I was left with him."

The chevalier's lips smiled under his smart moustache.

"Ah, madame, with him I travelled fast from the church, and all that sort of thing. The life was hard, but there is no easy way of becoming a soldier. And it seemed to me the worse I was according to my mother's standard, the better I pleased my brother. And it was not all drilling, I can tell you! A soldier, you know, has to know the gay world; to drink, to curse, to swear, to dance, to make love, to carouse—all night! I was not a bad scholar, it seems; I was young, good looking, and a dare-devil on a horse. I became a pet with the officers and with the ladies; it was a gay life and one that would have suited my father perfectly. I dressed fine, I danced, I made love, I did not go to church!"

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"Oh, Monsieur le Chevalier!" She laid her soft hand on his arm.

"Military virtues, as my brother called them, I practised all of them. In fact there was not a man that he frequented and made me frequent that knew of any other kind. And it was not my pleasure, but it was made my duty to fence with my brother every day; and it was not long before I became a better fencer than he, and he had a great reputation with the sword. I was younger and stronger than he and quicker-witted, as I soon found out.

"At last one day my father came to Paris to see how I was progressing in the good way, as he considered it. And when he saw me, he was so much pleased that he embraced me and gave me a purse full of money. And now—— But I am talking too much, I am fatiguing you."

"No, no, chevalier, continue! Your father, you were saying——"

"My father had a great plan in his head. He had heard that there were troops to be sent to Louisiana, and using his influence at court, and he had great credit with the highest men in it, he had me included in the company to be sent out. I was named a sous-lieutenant in it. He had a fine uniform made for me, presented me to the

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minister, and saw me duly registered to leave on the next boat."

"But your mother? Chevalier, your poor mother!"

"When I saw that my father intended me to go straight to my vessel and not waste time by going to say good-bye to her, I determined to go and say good-bye to her. It was not so hard; I was young and strong. I told my father good-bye with all ceremony, and I listened to him when he told me to be sure and make my fortune in Louisiana, where gold mines were to be found everywhere for the seeking. My brother had invited him to dinner at a famous restaurant, where he would meet only men to his liking. So, when I left him, I had only to mount my horse and ride all night, instead of starting at daylight as he told me."

The chevalier chuckled at the memory of it. "I was delighted to fool him for once in my life, but I was more delighted to see my mother again! She was still in bed when I reached the château, next morning, a little after daylight. But I went straight to her room and called to her."

"She was glad to see you?" said his companion.

"Madame, there is no joy on earth like that of a mother when she sees a child she loves! And my joy was as great, I promise you. We passed the day together in peace and quietness, for my

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father could not return from Paris until nightfall. She questioned me; she drew my soul out of me, to see if there were any changes in her baby since he went to Paris. I told her everything, everything; just as I used to do when I lived at the château. And that night we said good-bye and she put her miniature around my neck, when she kissed me. 'You see, my son, I shall always be with you wherever you are; so do not take me into bad company!'"

They were strolling up and down the grassy yard at the back of the cottage, the location of the vegetable garden to be.

"Madame, it is my mother who taught me to worship women!"

"Ah, monsieur, all women are not like her! I wish they were. I try to be brave and strong and wise, but you know how poorly I succeed." She sighed so sadly that he hastened to turn the current of her thoughts.

"And you will not tell me what made you so happy in your dreams?"

She smiled and shook her head.

"Because you want your dream to come true? Is that the reason?"

"It is better for me to forget my foolish dream."

"You did not say it was foolish."

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"I wish I knew your mother, Monsieur le Chevalier."

"I wish so too, madame; she would love you."

"Love! Love! That is more than I ask in this life."

She sighed.

"Do not sigh, madame, and do not look so sad. I have told you about myself, and now you must tell me about yourself."

"I have nothing to tell about myself, monsieur, that is not sad."

"Look back; I am sure you will find something that is not sad. In the convent you had amusements, companions; tell me about them. Girls in convents have a very gay time, sometimes, I hear."

"Gaiety in a convent! No, that is an absurdity. We were not sent there to be gay or amuse ourselves!"

"But there are always happenings in convents as out of convents. Come, madame, tell me." She looked so small and delicate, walking by his side, her pretty face so sad, so unnaturally serious, that he could not help striving to make her break her reticence about herself.

"Tell me, at least, what was the most amusing incident of your convent life; what you smile at as you remember it."

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"Ah, yes, I could tell you that; and in truth I smile even here, as I remember it!"

"Ah! A la bonne heure! I knew it; tell me what it was. I want to see you smile."

"You must know, monsieur, in the convent we had an old cat; an ugly, cross old cat that we all hated. Well, what do you think? One day the Sisters—oh, they were horrified, I can tell you—found a dozen little kittens—but where do you think? In the chapel under the stall of the Mother Superior! You can imagine the scene, when she discovered them! In horror she ordered them to be taken away and—think of it—drowned, drowned! But we, the convent girls, precipitated ourselves upon them, and we took possession of them. We were delighted to get them; we hugged them; we kissed them, and begged the portress not to take them away; and she was a good woman and let us keep them. And we were so happy! That was my happiest time in the convent." She smiled happily at the memory of it.

"And then—and then?"

"We petted them and fed them and kept them in our laps, when we were studying; but of course the Mother did not know."

"Of course not!"

"And they were so good. They never made a sound when she was around. I had one. A pretty

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white one with a black spot on its forehead and on its little paws, and the tip of its tail was black."

"Yes, I have seen such."

"I loved it! I loved it with my whole heart; and thought about it when I should have been studying or saying my prayers."

"Yes, that is what we do when we are in love!"

"They grew very fast and we found it hard to keep them still in our laps, and hidden under our skirts. And one day, one day——" She paused. "One day——

"One day, it was in our catechism class, one little kitten jumped out, and then all jumped out as if they had agreed upon it. The Sister who was hearing our catechism was shocked—oh, shocked beyond all expression!"

"I can believe so!"

"And then the order was given that the kittens should be put into a basket, every one of them, and carried away! Oh, but we cried at that! We pressed them to our hearts; we kissed them; we cried; we begged! But there was no mercy for them that time, and the old portress, who hated cats, demanded that each one of us should give up our kitten. And she put them in a basket with a cover and marched away with them to the Sister of the playground, who was on duty, and she put the basket at her feet——" And now the Dame de

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Sainte Hermine laughed aloud, her first laugh in Louisiana.

"One of the girls slipped up behind and kicked over the basket, and the kittens all ran out. You should have seen them! And the old portress tried to catch them, but she was too stiff and old. And all the girls pretended to try and catch them; but it was only to hide them under their skirts! But we could not keep them. The Mother Superior, herself, came and ordered us to produce the kittens; and we had to do so. I was sorry; my poor little white one with the pretty black spots! I called her 'Minette.' And so they were carried away, and we never saw them again! They had to go! It seems the cook said that if the convent kept them, we would be overrun with cats!"

"That is credible!"

"Do you love kittens, monsieur?"

"I? Myself, I prefer dogs; but ladies prefer cats. If there were no ladies, there would be no cats in the world—and no kittens!"

"I love them! It was so good to feel the soft fur in my arms and against my cheek. And I love them all white with a black spot on the forehead, on each little paw, and on the tip of the tail. I think we ought to have convents filled with little kittens everywhere; then we would have something to love."

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He nodded, and then took his leave of her. She had become serious again; all her vivacity had departed, and he kissed an inert little hand as he left.

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CHAPTER XI

HOWEVER careless they might seen, and in fact were, of the religious significance of feasts, the pioneers in Louisiana neglected no opportunity of celebrating them on their secular side.

The warm, bright sunshine of Christmas Day deceived even the birds in the trees, who carolled forth their exuberant joy over the coming of another spring. The trees in the forest had not shed their leaves. Flowers awoke from their dormant bushes. Nature called for rejoicing, and there was rejoicing in the good old French manner. Guns were fired in salute of the august anniversary at daylight; and a great parade was held before the church bells rang to mass. The streets were crowded with spectators of it; the women and little children, to whom a uniform and a fife and drum changed as if by enchantment the ordinary aspect of the place, and the very faces and figures of the men. The officers with their air and mien of gods walked in front, resplendent in their fine uniforms and in their consciousness of superman-hood as soldiers of France, and defenders of a

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great and vast country over which the banner of France waved in proud possession.

The parade terminated not at the church, for the church was still only in slow process of being rebuilt, but at the barracks where a temporary shelter for God (as it was called) had been installed. And here the soldiers, after an inspection by their high-and-mighty officers, were dismissed, to go to mass? Oh, no; to slip away to their quarters which were far from the godliness prescribed by the neighbourhood of their good mother, the Church!

And the officers, it must be confessed, were no more reverent than their men. They, too, slipped away to their rooms with no more acknowledgment of their religious duties than God could extract from the military salute and parade.

The women, of course, were dutifully fulfilling their duties as enjoined by the priests, and they dragged their children after them. Madame Catherine and her charge in the course of time were dismissed from the ugly, little, shabby room where, to the shame of the colony, be it said, Christ's nativity was being celebrated in little better surroundings than eighteen hundred years before.

Madame Catherine did not fail to decry and to deplore the sacrilegious spirit of fun and merriment that soiled, so she said, the purity of the

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day. And far from letting themselves participate in it, they sat within their doors abjuring even a glance at the beauties of nature.

But when the New Year came, it was a different matter. There was a réveillon the night before. in the cabarets and little houses; and at midnight the huzzas and shouts of joy filled the small precincts and rose to the very heavens! Casks of wine were opened in the barracks yard, and in the officers' quarters champagne fell in an unceasing frothy foam, as from a fountain.

At daylight again the cannon was fired in salute and a parade was formed that was all that a jolly parade should be, with no disturbing thoughts of church or duty.

The officers, still flushed from their carousing of the night, seemed even more resplendent in their uniforms than on Christmas Day. The sun itself was not brighter in its glory than they in their uniforms. And the waiting women and children in the streets were gay with laughter and talking. Fires smoked on every hearth, and the smell of roasting turkeys and pigs filled the air as the holy incense did the festival before.

Every woman had put on some bright ribbon or head-piece, and most of them flounced in and out of their cabins in new gowns. The children had been washed and dressed and put on the front-

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door steps to show off their cleanliness and finery.

Madame Catherine was as punctilious about New Year as she had been about Christmas. The open windows of her cabin showed the bright floors, and branches from the evergreen forest trees had been hung on the walls and placed in the fireplace, empty of fire, and to hide the blackened andirons. Madame Catherine, herself, sat in a large chair near a table on which stood a cake and a decanter of liqueur, with its tiny glasses. Marie Alorge did not appear in her chair until later.

To meet Catherine's wish and to give her a New Year's present for her eyes, Marie Alorge had gone to the bottom of her chest and had extracted therefrom the careful parcel pinned tightly and placed there by her old nurse, with God knows what idea in her old brain, except that it should not be left behind to be cast away to servants or some unworthy favourite of the old lord.

The parcel held the dress that had been prepared for occasions after her marriage. It was of silk, brocaded with flowers, and with it were carefully wrapped up a pair of high-heeled slippers with red heels, and a ribbon for her hair. The dress had a fichu around the neck, and lace to the sleeves. With the sounds of merriment all around her, and excited by the fine parade of the morning and the sight of so many resplendent officers, it is no won-

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der that the coquette, that sleeps but never dies in the heart of woman, should have animated her to match beauty with beauty, and fine dressing with fine dressing. She fastened and pinned her dress and its fine fichu, curled her hair and lifted it from her face with the pretty ribbon, drew on her clocked stockings, and pulled on her satin slippers, unthinking, almost unconscious. When she stepped from the little closet that served as a chamber, Catherine rose involuntarily to greet the fine appearance.

"Bonne année! Madame Catherine!" The old woman looked at her and nodded her head. She was not as naïve and unconscious as the young lady was. She drew her chair forward and even went so far as to find a cushion for the feet in the pretty clocked stockings and slippers. "There," she said, "now you look like the ladies in Canada!" But she went and closed the window that opened on the street and threw open the other opening on the great expanse of the yard with its trees. It was not long before she was called to open the door, by a knock.

Bienville entered. He was dressed in his costume de gala; which was a brown velvet, with a fine sword at his side, on his head a hat with a silver galloon around the crown. At his throat, he wore the, to him, unaccustomed elegance of a

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white linen jabot; but he looked just the same. He was still Bienville, and only Bienville; low of stature and inelegant of figure; but with a head of fine majesty, as Madame Catherine remarked to herself, and eyes that shone with all the power of innate dignity.

But as impervious as he was to the fascination of female charms, he could not forbear a pause of admiration as his eyes fell upon Marie Alorge. To hide it, he began at once to speak to Catherine.

Then, as if by appointment, came another knock, and the royal councillor, De la Chaise, entered.

Majestic as Louis himself, he entered. Bowing low as only a king can bow before a court lady, he presented his flowers to the young woman. He was in his costume of ceremonious occasions of ceremony; but so superior was he to his clothes that one did not notice his black velvet coat, white satin vest, and silk stockings.

Sitting politely on the rims of the chairs that Catherine had placed for them, the men were about to begin the overtures of their formal, dignified conversation, when came another knock, and in walked the chevalier.

Unlike Bienville, he was in no wise intimidated by the unwonted costume, and unlike the royal councillor he was not so superb that he did not shine with unwonted brilliancy in it.

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He advanced, with assurance, on his red-heeled slippers, his fine figure showing to full advantage in his glossy silk stockings; his handsome face drawing new beauty from the fine lace of his full tie.

Taking his laced and braided three-cornered hat from his impeccable perruque, he bowed to the floor before both women, handing a bouquet to Catherine, who received it, stiff with astonishment, while, slipping his left hand from underneath the voluminous skirt of his blue velvet coat, lined with white satin, he drew forth a small basket.

"Madame," he said, "I lay at your feet a heart filled with devotion that craves your love," and with a twist turned out a small kitten, with a black spot on its forehead and a blue ribbon tied around its neck.

Forgetting her fine clothes, her dignity, and the rank of her visitors, Marie Alorge jumped from her seat with a cry of delight, seized the kitten, and held it to her bosom, pressing kisses on its white coat.

"Minette, Minette!" she cried.

Bienville and De la Chaise were forced from their imperturbability into a laugh.

"Ah, Monsieur le Chevalier," said the latter, "you always score over every one else!"

The kitten, which was very wild, jumped from

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her arms and landed full on the breast of the governor, and held on there despite his hasty movement to get rid of it.

"Monseigneur," said the chevalier, "you must not seduce Minette from her mistress!"

But her mistress was already withdrawing Minette's claws, when the cat jumped to the floor and scampered like a streak of lightning round and round, seeking a way to escape to the room where was the open door.

"Oh, catch it, catch it, do not let it get away!" she called, and all ran forward after the kitten, falling over one another and stretching their bodies toward it—governor, royal councillor, and chevalier.

It was the chevalier who recaptured it at last, and holding in a tight grasp the scratching claws, stroked its pretty fur, calling its name, "Minette, Minette!"

The lady came to take it; he held it away. "What will you give me for it, madame? What forfeit will you pay for it?" he asked, laughing.

Picot, the sly rascal, who could have captured the kitten quicker than any one else in the room, knew better than to take part in the merry chase; but, on the contrary, gave the frisky little animal a sly kick whenever it seemed inclined to give up, and so stimulated it to new racings. And when

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he judged it opportune, he passed the silver tray with the liqueur in the tiny glasses, into which Catherine had poured it.

The company found it hard to drink, from laughter.

The royal councillor raised his glass: "A good and happy New Year to madame and to—Mademoiselle Minette." His handsome face never looked handsomer than when flushed, as now, with pleasure.

Picot had slipped aside, and by the time the liqueur was drunk, he had commenced a gay tune. "An appetizer," he said to himself. The gay tune, which was in fact a cabaret tune, he changed to—what of all things!—a minuet.

That was a surprise. What scenes of brilliancy its soft, graceful strains called up!

The chevalier without a word held out his hand to the young lady; before she was aware of it she had taken it. The chevalier bowed, sweeping the floor with his hat; curtsying, she sank to the ground in the folds of her glistening silk skirt; and then holding it high with her left hand, she advanced her foot in its satin slipper and silk stocking.

He raised his foot, and they stepped out with the high steps of the minuet: four paces this way, four paces that; another bow; as pretty a sight as

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any court could offer, in the plain little room of the homely Louisiana cabin.

Bienville had never seen anything like it in his hard, bare, dry, frontier life. He had never dreamed that young men and women had such a pretty pleasure in life.

De la Chaise, who undoubtedly had trodden all measures of amusement in his life, had never seen a minuet that he admired so much. He straightened his body, inclined his head, smiled, and advanced a leg as if he, too, were dancing once again with a beautiful young woman.

Bienville, watching him closely, saw that he did not take his eyes off the beautiful one before him, and he wondered at it, in his plain, simple heart.

But that was not all. Picot was too fertile in devices for that. He played now a saraband, and stepping out well in front showed them what was intended. The chevalier with his partner followed. De la Chaise seized the hand of Catherine, and drew her awkward figure from its chair, and followed after. Only Bienville was left. Marie Alorge, dropping the chevalier's hand, took his, and he followed. The chevalier led the way like a drum-major.

Round and round the room they went. Picot did not let their steps flag until he brought them

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again to the little table where stood the liqueur; where with a bow he released them. As a river swollen with too great a volume of water—as the Mississippi, in short, breaks through its levee in high water, by finding first a crack through its barricade and sending a rivulet through it—so the youth of the young couple, from trickling through in the crevice of the dance, now burst through and flooded the veins with its long-repressed force.

The chevalier laughed with gladness, showing his white teeth; the young lady found the colour mounting to her face, and she showed her pretty white teeth, too, in smiles such as Louisiana had never seen from her before.

Dame Catherine forgot that she was old and a widow, for she felt young again, and Etienne was by her side.

It was all Picot, Picot with his devil of a violin! and the little kitten lying snugly in a chair purring itself to sleep.

"See!" called Marie Alorge, holding it up, "a black spot on its forehead, and one on its tail and little black paws, just like Minette!" and she kissed and hugged it again and again.

"How the devil," Bienville asked himself, "did he come to think of a kitten?"

"Why did not I think of a kitten?" queried the

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envious De la Chaise of himself. "Ah, it is love, only love that inspires the unimaginable!"

Cities, like children, are merry and gay-hearted according to the parents God grants them, and New Orleans received from the good God the divine gift of light-heartedness and taste for merry-making, that turned it away from the path where they met puritanical contemplation of sins and wickedness, into the path like their forest, filled with the evergreen boughs and blossoms of peace and love and laughter.

In every little cabin of the new settlement, in every cabaret, there was on this first night of the new year, feasting, dancing, laughter. And all night long in the streets went the merry-makers, singing their songs, kicking up their heels, and snapping their fingers in the face of the future. It was youth, breaking through its barriers and gushing out its overflow.

That night the chevalier gave Picot a gold piece.

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CHAPTER XII

SPRING with all its opulence of colour and fragrance was in full sway in the new city, when a sailing vessel, arriving from Mobile, brought the official courier. It contained a bomb whose explosion shook not only the city but the whole province of Louisiana.

This was an order from the board of directors in Paris for Bienville to return at once to France to answer charges made against him! Chateaugay, his brother, was to return with him, and his two devoted nephews, the De Noyans. The three were deprived of their military rank and their property was confiscated. It was intimated to them that they should return at once in the government vessel awaiting in Mobile Bay, the same ship that had brought the order.

The colonists felt in a worse condition than after the storm, as they now saw themselves abandoned and defenseless. The Indians were afraid of Bienville, who exercised absolute authority over them. They knew his strength and his implacability, the only qualities they respected in a chief.

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He was ruthless in anger, but he was just. Many of the councillors were dismissed by the Government and the office of the attorney-general was abolished.

De la Chaise alone remained in full jurisdiction; in truth, he was made officially the dominant authority in the colony.

The military command was given to the Chevalier de Loubois.

When Bienville, smarting under the sting of his disgrace, and furious over his humiliation, went at once to see De la Chaise, he found him sitting serenely, unmoved, in his office which was in his home; made comfortable and secure by the absence of his wife in France.

He was meditating as Bienville entered and writing down notes on a slip of paper. He received Bienville pleasantly and courteously as if nothing more were the matter in the colony than the daily trouble with "gardes-magasins" and insubordinate civil officials.

He ignored Bienville's disgrace so successfully that the Canadian's confidence in the reality was shaken. Nevertheless, he forced the question of it upon him with such obstinacy that the courtly official, with all suavity, considered it; and together they conversed on the necessary methods to insure the continuance of the

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present condition of order among the whites and Indians.

But as soon as possible he diverted Bienville's attention to what in truth had been the subject of his meditations—Madame de Sainte Hermine and her unfortunate condition, which he acknowledged would be made worse by the absence of so good a friend as Bienville; and the embarrassing advent of a new governor, who might prove unsympathetic with her, if not inimical.

He proposed to Bienville to take up her sad case as soon as he had arrived in Paris, and gave him the notes he had written for his guidance.

"Do not put yourself in opposition to men of influence, over there, on the question of the lettre de cachet. We do not know the full truth about that; we only judge from our impressions of the lady. Accusations of injustice and complaints of ill-treatment find little hearing among high officials. In truth, as you will find, one half of France is accusing the other half all the time of hanging offenses. And do not show too much interest in her; that will only breed suspicion and do the poor lady harm instead of good. Instead, try to find out something about the property that her father left, and what the uncle did with it; and see if something could not be extracted from it for

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her support. The prisoners in the Bastille even have a pension allotted them."

"But——" interrupted Bienville at last.

"Oh, I know what you would say; the cost of her support out here is a mere trifle. As you know, I have managed to put it in our secret expense. But"—he shrugged his shoulders—"when you are away—— The best thing would be to send her back to France."

"To send her back to France!" repeated Bienville. "But how?"

De la Chaise never needed to wait for the end of a sentence; he always knew in advance what a thought was. "Of course, as you were about to ask, how can we do that? It might be managed. I have thought about it; but the truth is, my friend, she would be in a worse condition in France, without money, than she would be here, with her beauty, her charm—and her youth." The middle-aged man seemed to see her before him. "No, let us try to obtain for her some of her fortune, so that she can maintain herself when she returns to France. If we can get her back to France with some money she will not be worried about the lettre de cachet. You must do so and so—and so and so——"

Bienville listened with impassive face, thinking naturally, at the moment, of his own ruined for-

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tune and of his enemies and of the commissioner before him whom he shrewdly suspected of putting his deft hand into the work of having him recalled to France.

Since his brother Iberville's death he had counted on no friends in Paris, which in truth represented to his ignorant mind a wilderness worse than any he had ever encountered in America; its kings, courtiers, judges, its titled and gilded officers, no better than lying, unscrupulous Indians, who cared only for Louisiana according to what they could make out of it.

What hopes could he have of justice in Paris—when even here in his own little government of Louisiana, where his officials had been turned against him by government spies and mischief-makers, and rivals envious of his good fortune and good name, anxious only to put some one in his place whom they could manipulate and turn to their tricks!

"Madame de Sainte Hermine," he repeated, pretending to be interested. Yes, he would remember; he would speak about her as soon as he saw the minister.

"By no means. By no means!" hastily interrupted the councillor. "Do not mention her name to him! He would suspect something at once, and write over here to make enquiries and stir up

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more trouble for us; particularly if there was a whisper that she had a chance for money. Money is looked upon as a game over there, and all hunters are after it," and he shrugged his shoulders ominously.

The simple-minded Canadian, appalled at the disturbance caused by his own suggestion, nodded shamefacedly, and with a last glance at the inscrutable blue eyes of De la Chaise, went off to make a report of the interview to De Loubois, the only friend he trusted, now, in the colony.

The officer listened suspiciously. "I do not believe a word he says. He is too damned clever! He would like us to follow him as if he were God in heaven. Forget everything he has told you; that is what I would do in your place. You go straight to the minister and demand to know the charges against you, and who made them. And be sure and send me the names of those, over here." He looked at his friend and nodded significantly. "Present your memorial. You can write it going over on the ship. I wish to God you could present it to the king himself! See that it is read and insist on an answer. Do not let yourself be set aside or trampled underfoot. The devil! I should like to see the man who could accomplish what you have done. When they see you, they will understand you. La Dame

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de Sainte Hermine! La Dame de Sainte Hermine!" he repeated, mimicking De la Chaise's smooth voice. "Ha! I should like to know what we have to do with her fortune. Send her back to France, indeed! Oh, yes, he would send her back to France!" The chevalier was in a rage now.

"Take her away from Louisiana and her friends and send her back to France! They have sent her out here, let them send for her. But that scoundrel of a husband, that hound! Bienville, if you should catch up with him, or manage it in some way, for God's sake make her a widow! That would be better than making her an heiress, as our jesuitical friend advises." Bienville nodded intelligently. How much better he could understand the Chevalier and his simple reasoning, than the great Councillor, whose elegant sentences seemed to be invented to becloud rather than enlighten.

After this they came to the important business in hand, the new governor and the affairs of the colony.

"The Indians will soon find out what sort of a man he is, and if he does not understand his business, they will soon teach him," began Bienville.

"If he is such a fool as to need to be taught," said Loubois sharply, "we might just as well give up the province and go back to France with you."

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"As long as we keep peace with the Natchez," continued Bienville in his quiet, even voice, "we shall be safe. But if they see a cause to raise the hatchet against us, the Choctaws and the Chickasaws will join them, and the English will not fail to seize the opportunity; and we will have trouble."

"Pardi! the English will not miss such a chance," answered De Loubois. He foresaw, perhaps even clearer than Bienville (with his sharper comprehension of all military matters), the serious aspect of the future with a new governor who did not know the country.

"But you will be sent back, Bienville. They will have to send you back! You are the only man here that the Indians fear, and when they do not fear, you know, they will betray; the Natchez just like the rest."

"The Natchez will never betray us!" answered Bienville confidently.

He and his brother and his two nephews left the next morning, taking a small sailing vessel to reach Mobile, where the royal ship, according to orders, was waiting for them. The entire population was waiting since daylight along the bank of the river to wave good-bye to him—even the women with their children coming out of their cabins and leaving their morning work undone.

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The soldiers marched to his hotel to escort him to the boat. The Canadians, in a body, waited to follow him. They were openly resentful and disrespectful to the officials at the disgrace inflicted upon one of them.

The councillors stood at the landing. They were not yet aware of their share in the governor's misfortune, which they had worked to bring about.

De la Chaise stood with them but not among them; serenely haughty and self-possessed, he showed none of the nervousness that they did. In his official costume of black silk, white silk stockings, and buckles on his shoes, carefully dressed wig and fautless linen, his polished exterior reflected the light of a luminary that apparently did not shine on his confrères.

With banners flying, music playing, and officers at their head, the troops appeared, marching down Chartres Street. The soldiers, for all their bad reputation as the offscourings of Paris, made a brave show in their ragged uniforms, cleaned and mended to pass inspection; their well-polished arms glittered in the morning sun. They marched so well that no one would have suspected their innate worthlessness.

Their officers appeared, as they always did, no matter what the stress of their finances was, royal officers and gentlemen. Bearing fine names, and

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possessing ample means, they kept up the prestige of their nobility. They wore handsome uniforms of glossy blue with buff on red facings, shining top-boots, and perruques dressed by an imported perruquier from France. The officers, in fact, marched as if they commanded the finest corps of troops in the realm, and were parading them under the eyes of the king and his court. The cannoneers stood ready with their pieces of ordnance, but according to orders of the ever-provident Bienville, no salvos were to be fired in order to save ammunition. The troops presented arms as Bienville passed, dressed in his homely, loose-fitting coat and hose of brown, followed by a negro, carrying his small wooden box.

As the boat pushed off from the bank and started downstream, hats were waved, huzzas were shouted, cries resounded, carrying good wishes. The women held up their little ones and waved handkerchiefs and aprons. Many of them wept.

The groups of councillors retired, abashed, in guilty confusion, followed by looks and gestures of contempt.

"What? What?" was asked by the women, who, with the recklessness of their sex, scorned discretion. "What is to become of the colony?—when the only man in it who could defend it has been recalled."

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"Let the Indians come and take back their land. France does not deserve any better!"

Others put different words to their sighing as they looked around mournfully on the pretty spot rescued from the savage forest and made into a city by Bienville. "This, this is our reward for all our church-going and fasting on Fridays! We were better off without the priests! As my husband says, God is not good to us, and that is the truth!"

But the one little church bell was calling them to mass, and they docilely obeyed it, while the men walked off in another direction. But the sharp eyes of a Capuchin were watching them, and he had a leash on them by which he could draw them back from their impudence whenever he wished it.

The small community was being shepherded by another set of pastors than in the past: men who were not to be made light of, who knew how to make use of their crooks. From France ordinances had at last come in answer to their representations. By royal command, not by priestly, the soldiers who served France and the king were to live as France and the king lived; that is, catholically. The soldiers were to perform their churchly duties with the same exactitude that they fulfilled their military duties. Even the officers,

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the whilom, handsome, finely dressed, aristocratic French officers, no longer could pass the priests with a haughty stare and with irreverent smiles.

By royal command they were ordered to participate in the sacraments and not hold ribald festivities on the eve of the great Church feasts, as had been their habit in the past. And the observance of this was committed to those most zealous of Church police officers, the Capuchins, not to the courtly, agreeable Jesuits, who if they had had a hand of iron, concealed it a little too effectually under a velvet glove.

The Capuchins, hardy, rough, courageous, were more like peasants than gentlemen, more like sheep-dogs than shepherds, as the captious tongues complained.

They and their denunciations, with earthly powers to reinforce their heavenly ones, were not to be trifled with, in the old way. Since their advent in the embryo city, they had taken vigorous hold of the souls committed to their charge; and as the other and politer priests had never been able to do, they had filled the church, not only on Sundays, but on other days and throughout this season of Lent. They had, by their vigilance and influence over the women, created a most edifying result. The secret sins of the men, betrayed, of course, by the women, were being weeded out, and their

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souls were being replanted with the good seed of the Church. The guilty young officers swore under their breath, but conformed; and they ceased to carouse under the windows of the priests' house and to give card parties on the feasts of the Church; and, what was more important, they forced their men to follow their example.

The Easter that was coming promised to be the most edifying ever witnessed in Louisiana. It is to be hoped, as the priests confidently averred to their flocks, safely housed in the new sanctuary, that the saints in heaven, and particularly St. Louis, looked down with pleasure on the little city of New Orleans! But, as we have seen, they did not prevent the calling away of the best man in the city, and under heaven the strongest defense against the Indians.

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CHAPTER XIII

AFTER Easter and its spiritual exigencies, the spring rise of the Mississippi began to claim attention; and on the warm, bright Sunday afternoons of early June the people of the city liked nothing better than to walk along the bank of the river and look at the height of the water and watch the formidable current carrying down to the Gulf the booty wrenched from the forests above; the huge trees, with their full green foliage, and massive branches stretching out on each side, like islands of verdure, and their stark roots grasping frantically at the air. It was a sight that never failed to attract the simple settlers and hold them fascinated with awe and fear.

Dame Catherine and Marie Alorge were among the promenaders one Sunday afternoon. The younger woman, holding tight to the arm of the elder, felt safe and happy in the enjoyment of her unwonted pleasure. In wonderment of all she saw, she had thrown her veil back from her hat, and, with bright eyes and parted lips, turned her head to look now at this, now at that. In her

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voluminous silk gown, with its tight bodice and white fichu, her long gloves and pretty shoes with buckles, and accompanied by Dame Catherine, she was too well known to excite curiosity, except from strangers.

A new arrival, a cavalier who was walking that way, however, caught sight of her lovely face, and his feet instinctively hastened to obtain for him a better view. He was tall and handsome and held himself haughtily, and seemed to demand recognition, if not obeisance, from those around him; and he received it. For, in a word, he was Philippe de Mandeville de Marigny, the most important and the richest man in the colony; and on the strength of these qualifications, the most presumptuous. He showed it in his manner of looking at the lady and following her.

The groups of humbler men fell away from him, and allowed him all the space he wished for his design. With the fatuous smile of a Parisian roué (he was in fact just returned from Paris), when he reached the side of the lady, he peered forward to look into her face; and his handsome lips were about to murmur a few sweet words in her ear, when he felt a tap on his shoulder, and a soft murmur in *his* ear:

"Sapristi! Monsieur de Marigny, you seem a little indiscreet!"

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"Sapristi! Monsieur de Loubois," came the quick answer, "you seem a little impertinent!"

"That can soon be decided, monsieur, at once."

Monsieur de Loubois, with his hand on his sword, stepped into a vacant space adjoining the river bank. Marigny followed, while the two women went their way.

The opponents were well matched in height and strength, and it would have been hard to say which one was the handsomer. Their blades flashed in the air; but after a minute the sword of Mandeville was sent flying over his head.

De Marigny smiled with the humorous smile that became a historical trait in his family. "It is decided; I am indiscreet!"

"It is your only fault, Philippe," answered the chevalier, picking up the disgraced sword and handing it to him.

The other made a low bow, as he restored it to its scabbard. "A compliment from so consummate a swordsman is indeed a gratification."

And then both laughed and, linking their arms, walked off together like the two good friends they were; the chevalier eagerly explaining the history of the beautiful lady, and not concealing his reasons for shielding her from uncomfortable curiosity.

De Marigny nodded. If there was one subject

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of knowledge he was proficient in, it was ladies and their various adventures, particularly beautiful ladies, for this was the branch to which he devoted most attention.

He was full of advice to the chevalier, and showed him various ways by which he could extricate himself from a hopeless state of affection, swearing that if he had known it, in France, he would have taken upon himself the solution of the problem. That would have cleared the situation to the satisfaction of all concerned.

In the meantime, Dame Catherine and her charge had returned to their little home.

A few weeks later, Catherine entered the chevalier's room in the barracks. It was early morning; he was dressing.

He jumped at the sight of her and hurried to her. "What's the matter, Catherine? What has happened?"

"I must speak to you, chevalier, alone! Picot" —to the valet—"go and stay at my house until I return. Madame de Sainte Hermine is all alone."

When Picot had shut the door behind him, "Chevalier, you are not acting right by that poor little lady!"

"What do you mean, Catherine?" He faced her with a frown.

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"Oh, you know very well what I mean, my son; you know, but she does not know."

"I know what? Speak plainly."

"No, I will not speak plainly! I must not speak plainly, out of respect to her!"

"But, Catherine, tell me what you want; you know me!"

"Chevalier, answer me!" She raised her head firmly and looked him in the eye. "You love Marie Alorge! You love her!"

"Yes, I love her!"

"And what then, eh? That is what I want to ask you. After love, what?"

"Sapristi! Catherine, you know very well. After love—union."

"Union? Not marriage, eh? That is exactly what I wanted to know!" She turned away.

"But how can we marry?" he asked impatiently. "You know we cannot marry!"

"She is married already!"

Quickly he retorted, "If she is married she is not a wife!"

"Anyway, she cannot be married to you. No priest will marry her to you! He cannot."

"Then, Catherine, we must do without a marriage."

"Do without it? Ha! That is what I thought. That is what you are thinking? Union, union—

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you will offer her union!"—pronouncing the word with contempt. "Union—you will offer her union! Yes, we all know what that is. The fine French officers have taught us; and those poor girls, that walk the streets ashamed to look an honest woman in the face. Chevalier, do you mean that?"

"What can I do, then?"

"My God! You know what you can do. A chevalier, you ask me, an ignorant Canadian, what you can do! What would you do in a fight? Give up to your enemy? You, a brave man?"

"But she—but she?"

"In the name of God do not ask me what she should do! You know what she ought to do!"

He turned his back upon her to avoid looking at her and stood looking out of the open window at the river. In his fine white linen shirt and his tight knee breeches, he was in Catherine's eyes the handsomest figure of a young man she had ever seen; strong, stalwart, perfect in every particular. She fixed her eyes upon his back, that seemed to brace itself against her words. She went on firmly:

"Yes, she is young. She has no strength; she is weak in constitution; she has no courage; she is a child in her mind. And she has been ill-treated by those who should have protected her. The government has abandoned her, and may God aban-

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don them one day for it! She has no one to look after her, now that Bienville is gone, but a poor Canadian woman who is old enough to die and who should go back to her people in Canada. She has no courage, she is a poor child in misfortune, but I will tell you, chevalier, she has a spirit that never yields. You may break her heart, but not her spirit! She is not one of those street girls of Paris. Why not take one of them? There are plenty of them about and a gentleman does not have to care for their honour. Why not take one of them?" she asked, again losing her temper.

The chevalier turned his face towards her; it was drawn and white. "That is enough! Now, go!" He pointed to the door.

She walked away without another word, tall, thin, and inflexible in her worn, faded cottonade gown with her clean handkerchief folded over her breast. She gave him one look from her honest, sad eyes, and, as he commanded, walked away; but before she reached the door, the chevalier with his light, quick tread had caught up with her. Taking her thin old shoulders in his hands, he turned her around and, bending his head, kissed her on one cheek and then on the other, tears from his eyes falling upon them.

"You are right, Catherine; you are right!"

An hour later, Catherine, looking from a win-

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dow, saw him in his fine uniform, sword at side, and high boots, walking down the street towards the government offices; a noble and gallant figure; proud and firm of face and determined of expression.

In the evening he came, as was his habit, to see them and sit on the gallery with them, gay and talkative and intent only upon amusing them. "Shall we walk in the garden and pass the flowers in review?" he asked.

Madame Catherine slipped into the house; Marie Alorge went with him.

The flowers seemed indeed on dress parade waiting for a review. On each side of the broad central walk, the roses stood in serried ranks, a joyous sight in their rich, full colouring. At their feet, running over the ground in graceful wildness, were verbenas; along the borders was a thick growth of violets. The rich, new soil, as the pioneers said, was waiting only for flowers to show what it could do. Lilies ranged behind the roses, amid them bloomed jasmines, white and yellow. Beyond, hiding the fence, were oleanders, white and pink, still covered with blossoms. Along the fences were wistaria and wild cypress vines, while the old mutilated magnolia bore its ethereal white flowers.

The two walked slowly, stopping to notice the

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flowers. With a penknife, the chevalier stooped and cut a full and radiant rose.

Inhaling its fragrance, and pressing it against his face, at last he spoke what was on his mind.

"This time tomorrow, madame, I shall be at my new post."

"Your new post?"

"Yes. Up the river, near Natchez. The governor should have had a command there long ago. He has decided at last to send me." While he spoke he looked over her head at the forest line beyond the city, his eyes not even glancing at her face. When they reached the end of the walk they turned.

"Will you be long away?" she asked in a low voice.

He shrugged his shoulders. "One never knows."

"I—I shall miss you." She would not look up at him; her eyes were fixed on the ground. They reached the seat under the magnolia, and she sat down upon it inertly.

He pressed the red rose into her hand, and felt her fingers cold and trembling; he covered them with both his hands. As she did not speak, he did.

"Ah, madame, this is not the way for a French lady to send her knight away to the fight! She must whisper courage to him or he could not go."

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"It—it is so sudden!"

He still held her cold fingers in his warm grasp. Suddenly he bent over and lightly pressed his lips to them. "Adieu, adieu!"

"But you will come back soon again?"

Again he bent over the little hands. "Yes, yes, I shall come back!" He turned and passed from her out to the gate and beyond; he did not look behind but ever before him at the forest line. And then, he was gone!

She sat as he had left her, leaning her head back against the trunk of the magnolia, until the sunlight gave way to the evening shades in the garden.

Dame Catherine came out of the house, looking curiously at her. "What is the matter, madame? You are so pale!"

"In truth, I am a little tired and my hands are cold."

"Wait!" And Catherine brought her a glass of liqueur. "Anisette, drink it. It will warm you; drink it all!" and taking the young woman by her frail arm, she led her into the house.

The Angelus began to ring.

"Dame Catherine, let us go to church." Her voice was faint and low.

"Yes, let us go to church," answered Catherine at once, willingly.

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They crossed a little street and entered a path that led to a side door. The new church was still in disorder with the litter of the carpenters and brickmasons, but they went to a dark corner near the altar, where a single taper of home-made wax burned dimly. Dame Catherine, stiff and straight on her knees, drew out her prayer-beads at once automatically, and began to mutter her regulation repetitions. But her thoughts soon led her away from this, and she began to make her personal communications to God, speaking to Him frankly and brusquely as one good Canadian to another. She explained to Him why she had intervened between the chevalier and his designs, and what she thought was needful for the future in order to preserve the young people from injury to their morals. She did not seek advice or guidance, but rather, in her rigid conviction about the matter, gave it in full faith of the ensuing good result.

Marie Alorge, fragile and delicate, drooped by the side of her stalwart friend, and only by degrees ventured to approach the subject of her trouble and need. She had never known a father in the earthly sense, but she knew who and what a father was from the mysterious source of such knowledge. And it was from instinct, not from experience, that she put her hand up as if to draw down a venerable

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head to hers, and murmured what she never could have confessed to an earthly parent.

She told him all, all! How she had been sent from France and for what pretended cause; what she had suffered in crossing the ocean; her arrival in Biloxi and all the rest of it. The kind voice in her ear, the pleasant offices of friendship and—and——

She dared not go farther; but God was in the rough little sanctuary, and whispered peace and comfort to her. And the tears that started, as she told of the parting that evening, flowed back into her heart. She leaned her head like a tired child against the shoulder of her friend, and sighed as they rose from their knees to go back to their house.

During the night Madame Catherine heard her restless movements in bed. "Do you need anything, my child?" she asked.

"Oh, no, thank you, Dame Catherine," came the answer in a calm voice. "I am not sleepy, that is all!"

The old woman, who herself could not sleep, heard later what sounded like the sighing of soft weeping; but she pretended to be asleep, although she was far from it. Her heart was sad and not at peace, and it did not seem clear to her that the good God was helping her as Etienne used to help her when she was troubled.

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The morning was hot and dragged on slowly until Marie Alorge broke the silence by saying: "Madame Catherine, I want to go and see Monsieur de la Chaise, this morning. I want to give him an answer about something."

"Let us go at once," answered Dame Catherine promptly. "He must be in his office now." She led the way through the streets to the large low cottage that the lord high councillor had selected for his home. He had bought land for a fine plantation above the city, called La Nobiliaire, and his negroes were clearing it, to plant cane; but although he had a large, comfortable house there, he preferred the city house near the government office.

The green batten doors were hooked. Through the crack the visitors could see him sitting at the great square table before his papers and writing material. He rose and unhooked the door himself to let them in. He gave them seats at the table on plain cane-bottomed chairs. No one spent less on comforts and show than the lord high councillor.

"Monseigneur," began Marie Alorge as soon as she was seated, "you told me once that you were going to try and have me taken back to France."

"Precisely, precisely, madame." His face cleared at her words. "And I would have gone to you today, to tell you that my efforts were success-

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ful and that the ship on which you are to sail will arrive in the course of a few weeks and that you could begin your preparations for departure. You will be taken to France at the expense of the government, as you were brought here, but more comfortably." He smiled pleasantly over his good news.

"Monseigneur, I have come to tell you I do not want to return to France. I want to stay here!"

"Ah, you have changed your mind?" He shrugged his shoulders. "It is your privilege." He looked at her carefully. She was very white, but even with the unusual excitement upon her, her voice was clear and firm.

Monsieur de la Chaise rose from his chair, and, taking her by the hand, led her through an open door into the next room, whose windows were opened to receive the breeze that blew from the forest. He noticed that her hand was not cold nor did it tremble in his.

"Madame, would you tell me why you have changed your mind?" he asked in a low voice, to make sure of Madame Catherine not hearing.

"No, monseigneur, I cannot tell you why; but I do not want to return to France!"

"You do not wish to return, perhaps, because you are afraid. Ease your mind, madame, I have written to my sisters in France. You will find there good and true friends."

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She shook her head. "Monseigneur, I am going to stay in Louisiana!"

"Madame, you have not considered. France is a better country for the young and beautiful than Louisiana. France——" He paused and looked out of the window with an expression that more befitted a sight of Paris than what he saw before him—a garden with a homely display of vegetables aligned in their beds.

"You are young, madame; only at the beginning of your life. You do not know what you are declining! The future holds for you, perhaps, what you do not expect or dream of here. In refusing this opportunity, you are refusing what may prove a heaven on earth! A woman's heaven," he qualified. He sighed. "It may never come to you again!"

"Monseigneur, I have made up my mind. I shall not leave Louisiana!" Her eyes glowed like the eyes of a young saint, with faith and confidence; and in the eyes of Monsieur de la Chaise, she seemed to rise like a saint in grace and stature and beauty. Never had he seen her so beautiful.

He had been accused of having hard, cold, cruel eyes, that took pleasure in goading the victims of his ruthless cross-examinations to frenzy. No one could so accuse his eyes as he looked now upon Marie Alorge. They were, on the contrary, so

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much like the eyes of the Father to whom she had prayed the night before that her heart was on the point of breaking down in confession before him.

He saw it, and placed his hands softly on her shoulder. "No, no, you need not tell me, my child! Do not decide now; do not decide until the ship arrives. Then you can let me know and I will send you away. Then we can make all arrangements."

She lifted her eyes to his in a last look; they were moist with emotion, but firm in their resolve.

"Monseigneur, I shall never change. I have decided and it is for my life!"

There was no further gainsaying her. The great gentleman did not attempt it. Instead, he did a curious thing; he bent his distinguished head over her, until he could whisper in her ear: "And you have decided wisely, my child. God bless you!" And he led her back to Dame Catherine, still sitting in the torment of her perplexed thoughts.

"She has decided not to go to France, Madame Catherine, and we must do our part not to permit her to regret her choice!"

Poor Dame Catherine felt even more perplexed and tormented. "Ah, monsieur, she is young. We were all young once—and foolish!" She did not look, for her part, as if she had ever been young

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or foolish, so austere and rigid was her face, so inflexible her lips.

The lord high councillor, it could not be denied, had been young but he had never been foolish. That had never been a possibility with him. It was a pleasure that had been denied him, perhaps, because he had never felt young. He had chosen for the sake of his ambition not to listen to love, although he must have been warned by his heart, as he had been warning Marie Alorge. He had married a rich wife, not a beautiful young girl with curls falling over her brow and with magnetic eyes; and his rich wife had been only a rich wife to him, breaking down all his defenses of philosophy and religion. And the only reward of his conjugal fidelity and loyalty, to his ideals as a gentleman, had been a family of three daughters, who looked like their mother, and two sons still too young to disappoint him.

He walked the room restlessly after the women had gone and his thoughts went to work, not on the increasing entanglement of Louisiana affairs, but on the entanglement of life caused by youth and beauty.

Dame Catherine came to see him a few weeks later, and brusquely accosting him with, "Monseigneur, I had better tell you before you find it out," she related to him her visit to the chevalier

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and the result of her talk to him. And now she related that he had suddenly left for a post on the Mississippi.

De la Chaise listened with serious interest. "Ah, Madame Catherine, when we do our best we seem to make the most mistakes! You were right, you were perfectly right, but we must try now to repair the right."

"Monseigneur, I believe she will die, and it will be my fault! Yes, monseigneur, she does not sleep at night any more, and she does not care to eat. She is unhappy!"

"Does she complain of anything?"

"No, on the contrary she is cheerful and bright, and pretends that nothing is the matter with her."

"Have you heard from the chevalier?"

"Once Picot brought me a message from him, but he had no message for her."

"And he was well?"

"Picot said he was just as well as usual."

Monseigneur nodded his head. "And did you send him a message?"

"Yes, I told Picot that we were well as usual."

"Madame Catherine, we must help her if we can!"

"But how can we help her, monseigneur? That is just what I have come to ask you!"

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"We must try to bring her chevalier back to her!"

"Do you think of such a thing, monseigneur, after what I told you about him?"

"You told me that he loved her!"

"Ah, monseigneur, that is the trouble, that is all the trouble."

"And does he know that she loves him?"

"Dame, monseigneur!"

"He suspects it, does he?"

"Truthfully yes, monseigneur!"

"What sort of a young man is he, Dame Catherine?"

She told him. Ah, she could tell him that without reserve! "He came to the province, a young boy with a pretty face; delicate constitution. Bienville asked me to take him to live with me, until he grew old enough for the barracks. He came near dying of fever, and I nursed him; and my husband got permission to take him on his long expeditions in the woods. They tramped all the way to St. Louis, and back; and once he saved Etienne's life. Oh, he is brave! Etienne trusted him and taught him. There is no better coureur de bois in the colony today. And he is good, monseigneur! When he became old enough to go and live in the barracks, with older men, he did not follow their evil example. He remained a gentle-

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man, just as if he were still in the woods with Etienne. He is always laughing, as you see him, always gay, never down-hearted nor sad; always ready to give his last sou to one who needs it. I have been hard on him at times, monseigneur, and I have scolded him harshly as if he were like the other officers; but in truth, monseigneur, I knew different, and I love him as if he were my own son!"

Furtively, she wiped a tear from her eye, the eye that was more accustomed to sighting a gun than to shedding tears.

"Then, Catherine, could we do better in all conscience than let them alone? Than to let him love her, and let her love him? It seems to me that they were created to make each other happy!"

"Monseigneur!" The old woman rose from her chair in horror. "But they cannot be married! God forbids love without marriage!"

"God," he retorted testily; "what do we know about what He forbids or what He permits?"

"But the Church! Monseigneur, the Church!"

"The Church, the Church! It had better forbid marriage without love!"

"Monseigneur, you cannot mean——"

"Catherine, my good woman, I mean what I say. Let us leave those two young people alone!"

"Monseigneur, it is too late to do that. I have

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prevented, interfered with them! And I am right! Let them alone? Never, Monseigneur, as long as I am alive to prevent their committing sin!"

"Pardi! You have not prevented their loving!"

"No, no, monseigneur, but I can prevent the rest!" She was very excited; her wrinkled face flushed and her gnarled hands were trembling.

Monseigneur sighed: "Catherine, the rest is what they want and what they will have, believe me!"

"No, no! And the chevalier agrees with me; that is why he went away."

"Yes, because you frightened him."

The old woman sank down in her chair, helpless.

"Listen, Catherine. In my opinion Madame de Sainte Hermine is no more married than you are! Oh, I know you will say that the Church has blessed the marriage, and that she has pronounced the vows. But the Church made a mistake: the priest was in error; her vows are worthless. That is not marriage as God sees it!"

Catherine looked at him, aghast. If God did not approve marriage in church, blessed by a priest, what did He approve of? Unless He went against the Church, as heretics did! And the chevalier and Marie Alorge were both good Catholics, and not heretics who were going to be damned.

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"Surely, monseigneur does not mean to go against the Church?"

"No, but I am going to see what can be done in the Church. There are ways; there are ways."

"There are no ways in Canada, monseigneur; and Canada is a pious country."

He shook his head and repeated, "There are ways, there are ways."

"Monseigneur, are you going to tell her?"

"I must see the chevalier first."

"Well, then, I shall say good-day, monseigneur." And dropping him a curtsy she went away.

The streets outside presented their usual appearance of small business activity; but she walked through them with little interest, and not as she used to do with alert eyes, keen to note whatever was happening, as it were, to her own property. In truth, the colony was no longer the same since Bienville was recalled; the feeling of gloom and despondency that the first news of his disgrace caused had never passed away; but on the contrary had settled into a chronic state. Whereas the pioneers had walked the new ground with the quick, proud step of owners of the soil, it was now noticeable that they seemed not to care how the place looked, any more than if they were only tenants by the month. Tenants! That is what they were.

After discovering and settling the land, clearing

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plantations and building houses, and sending their roots into the soil, they could be ordered off by the owners in France who had done nothing towards securing possession. The little cabarets teemed with discontented talk; and every house was a nucleus of rebellion. The women were organs of revolution!

Madame Catherine walked along with an air of perfect indifference to her surroundings. What difference did it make to her that the oleanders brought from the Islands and planted in the various gardens were in full bloom; that the roses, glad to find themselves in congenial soil, were blooming with all their might, and that the vines planted only a year ago were clambering over galleries and doors? It seemed nothing to her now. Louisiana had been parted from its family and given over to hirelings. That miserable governor, Périer, to replace Bienville!

A man of craven spirit, who slipped into the city incognito in order to spy and listen and peer into the affairs of the people in order to become the talehearer that the government in France wanted. A talebearer! Bienville would never have consented to that. To spy and report about his own children and his own place! He, Périer, had no manners; rude, ignorant, the French officers, even though he was a Frenchman and an officer, shunned

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him! Madame Catherine, whose blood had become cool with age, felt hot as she thought of it; and she forgot the question that was weighing on her mind, when she went out to consult monseigneur, the royal councillor!

When she opened the gate into her yard, shaded by its great forest trees, she found Marie Alorge sitting just as she had left her with her embroidery, and her kitten playing about her. But her embroidery lay in her lap, and her hands lay idly upon it until she saw Madame Catherine; then she began to work again busily.

"Picot has been here," she said.

"Picot!"

"He will come back to see you!"

"And what news did he bring?"

Marie Alorge shrugged her shoulders. "He did not talk much to me."

"Did you ask him about the chevalier?"

"No."

"He must have come for something."

"He said he came to see you."

"Good! Then I shall find out what he came for!"

"There he is now, coming back!" Marie Alorge arose to walk away.

"But, no! Stay, his message is not just for me."

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Picot was tired and his clothes worn.

"What is it, Picot?" Madame Catherine asked bluntly.

"Nothing, Dame Catherine. Monsieur le Chevalier sent me to see how you were; that is all. I killed a wild turkey for you. You will find it in the house on the table."

"How are things going on at the post, Picot?"

"Well, madame, saving your presence and the presence of Madame de Sainte Hermine, affairs in the country are going to the devil, as Monsieur le Chevalier would say; but he does not say it!" he added quickly.

"How, Picot?"

"Well, Madame Catherine, I tell you because you must know it; the Indians are making us uneasy!"

"Eh? What are they doing?"

"They are not doing anything, so far; but they are getting angry, as we can see."

He spoke reluctantly, winking at Madame Catherine and casting furtive glances at Marie Alorge.

"What do you mean, Picot? Answer plainly. Madame de Sainte Hermine understands; she knows the country by this time!"

"The savages are discontented with the new governor; he is not the man to make them fear, and they have found it out!"

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"But, after all, it is the soldiers that count," Madame Catherine nodded sagaciously.

"You are right, Madame Catherine; but that is the trouble. The new governor does not govern the soldiers! Ah, you remember Bienville? He kept the soldiers in order as well as the Indians; and they need it, I guarantee, as much as the savages! Dame Catherine, the commandant at the post of the Natchez is showing no sense towards them. He is taking their land from them on any pretext, and is ill-treating them in every way he can! That is how it appears to me; and you may be sure the chevalier sees it, too! He has made his complaint to the governor; but the man up there is a favourite, and the governor does not interfere. Ha! If it were in the hands of the chevalier the story would be different! The Indians are plotting, and Chepar—that is his name—is such a fool he does not suspect it. But the Indians know what they are about, and when they strike, they are going to strike; depend upon it, Madame Catherine! Chepar will be the first to suffer. Yes, you will see!" And Picot shook his head portentously.

"And the chevalier, what is he doing?"

"He is doing everything! The savages can't fool him as they are doing Chepar! They will find him prepared, and ready to fight, when they rise!

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You may be sure of the chevalier, Madame Catherine."

The old woman glancing at Marie Alorge could not but see the pallor spread over her face.

"He is well?"

"Oh, yes! You know how he is? He is always well. He is not one to complain. But as for me, Dame Catherine, I find him changed; he does not seem to be the same!"

Dame Catherine arose and walked into the house. "Come, let us see that turkey!"

Picot followed; Marie Alorge went into the house. Dame Catherine stayed on the gallery to talk to Picot.

"Well, we all have to manage, Picot!"

"Yes." Picot imitated her indifference. "And you are all well here, Dame Catherine?"

Dame Catherine shrugged her shoulders, as she took the turkey to weigh it in her hand. "As you see; always the same; we do not change here!"

"I shall tell Monsieur le Chevalier what you say. And Madame de Sainte Hermine?"

"Madame de Sainte Hermine? What do you expect? Madame de Sainte Hermine? Well, you have seen for yourself!"

"Yes, so I shall tell Monsieur le Chevalier. She looks thin!"

"Bah!"

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"And I find her pale!"

"Bah!"

"And I should say she was sad, Madame Catherine."

"Bah!"

"You are sure she is well?"

"Picot, it is time for you to go, if you have done all you came for."

"Yes, Madame Catherine. It is time for me to go, if I have got through everything. But, Madame Catherine"—he lowered his voice to a whisper—"the chevalier says you are to send Bontemps back with me; he wants him at the post!"

Dame Catherine looked at him. "Very well!"

"I will take him back with me; so the chevalier ordered!"

She called Bontemps and gave him his orders. He was surprised and followed Picot out of the yard, just as he was.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE long hot summer with its apparently endless count of monotonous days had drawn to an end. There had been no overflow this time, no fevers; and there had been always a pleasant breeze every night to temper the heat. Men and women were gliding along smoothly and easily in their little business of making a living in the new country; or, when the stake was love, the young men and women pursued that goal of desire. The mothers who had sick children gave themselves up to praying and nursing, with equal devotion.

The wives with bad husbands, like such women in every age and clime, neglected their domestic duties to grow angry and talk over their provocations. The good priests walked the rounds of the houses, and, like the spiritual policemen they were, kept good watch against the enemy they were enlisted by God to fight.

But up at the Natchez nation, the summer was not so passed. The days were marked off by the Indians, by the burning of a twig each day at dawn before the altar fire. A tally of twigs had been

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sent to each temple in all the villages of the nation; and every warrior waited with an impatient heart for the last twig to be consumed. So cunningly had their plans been laid, so patiently and carefully carried out, that when the last twig in each temple was burned, one discharge of rifles, as at command of a military officer, was heard over the whole nation. And every white man fell with a bullet in his heart; his scalp under the knife of the savages.

The women and children were driven off into pens to be sold as slaves; the soldiers fell like animals before the butchers. The execution was not, however, carried out as planned. Two or three men who were out in the woods escaped.

Ricard was one of these. He had gone on a fishing expedition without leave. Hearing the discharge of firearms, the war-whoops of the Indians, the screams of the women and children, he fled to his pirogue, and with the swiftness of a frightened animal paddled to mid-stream; and on —on! Night and day, not stopping to eat, hearing always the whoops of the Indians in his ears, the screaming of the women and children! The strong current bore him along better than his paddle. He reached New Orleans in thirty-six hours. He was found in his pirogue, at daylight, stiff and cramped, unable to move; his eyes starting from

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his head, his face distorted like that of a lunatic.

He could only scream and shout, to the crowds collected, the news that he brought; the wildest, most terrible news a province in the New World could hear! The savages were rising and killing the whites everywhere!

"The dread and ravings of a drunken man!" No one listened to him. His own wife spurned him. "Drunkard! Come home and go to bed!"

But two days later, two men who had also escaped, arrived. They had only travelled by night to escape the prowling savages. The story they told was listened to and believed. The settlement at Natchez was destroyed! No white man up there had survived. If the Natchez had not stopped to get drunk on the liquor from the fort, and given themselves up to a wild orgy, they would have been already on their way to the city, destroying every white settlement in their way.

The city shook with panic as by an earthquake. Never had Frenchmen felt so helpless, so like cowards, before! The officers had to drive the men with their swords out of the barracks. Périer, beyond himself in such a crisis, could think of nothing better than to massacre while there was time, as the Indians were doing.

He secretly called together a company of negroes

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from the plantations, and arming them sent them out to destroy all the little Indian villages lying around New Orleans. The negroes proved themselves able executioners of such an order. Not an Indian escaped their treacherous and secret attacks.

The little village of the Chetimachas, on the opposite side of the river, to whom Bienville had sent a warrant of safety and protection by the hand of the old nurse, was lying in sleepy torpor, the men all off on a hunt, only the women and children in camp. All had their throats cut by the negroes —old women, young girls, and the children! And the village was burned. The negroes returned in triumph and Périer rewarded them. And now, with a return of common sense, he gathered a band of Canadians and what soldiers could be spared, and sent them in barges up the river to warn all the planters along the coast and set out himself to join forces with De Loubois and make an effort to rescue the women and children in the power of the Natchez.

He left the city in command of Mandeville de Marigny, who ordered all women in the environs to be brought to the church, the strongest building in the city, whose brick walls offered some means of defense, while he stationed men around the new convent, whose nuns had but recently taken possession of it. Sentinels were posted to keep a

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look-out and runners were sent into the woods to spy out any advance there.

From up and down the coast the women and children were brought into the city, those that could do so, walking; others came in little carts. The women weeping and screaming, in terror at every noise, the children clinging to their skirts howling in their fear.

"And the chevalier, Dame Catherine? Do you think the Indians——" Marie Alorge's voice paused in fear of her own question.

Madame Catherine did not need to hear the end of her question. "Ha! The Indians would never take the chevalier by surprise! He is not such a fool as Chepar!"

"God grant it, Madame Catherine! God——"

"God takes care of the good soldiers, as my husband used to tell me. I warrant that Chepar is paying up in hell today for his rascalities! It is lucky that the chevalier was in the way. The Natchez would have come to New Orleans and surprised us! Who knows?"

"Oh, Dame Catherine!"

"Why not? They are good soldiers, the Natchez. Bienville always said they were the most intelligent of all the savages; and were the best fighters."

She and Marie Alorge went over to the church, after barring all the windows and doors and hid-

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ing all they held as valuable. Dame Catherine took her rifle with her and her powder-flask, which she kept filled as she used to do in the days of running the forest with her husband.

The church presented a strange sight, with the Place d'Armes in front filled with carts and animals, and its porch crowded with refugees, calling upon the priests to open the doors at once as the savages were coming; their war-whoops could be heard; forms had been seen lurking in the forest!

The door was opened by the curé himself, who let the suppliants in, telling them to go and sit on the floor. Four soldiers advanced as carefully as possible, carrying a mattress on their shoulders. The curé looked at it with anguish on his benevolent face.

"She comes from the farthest house on the bayou, mon père," explained one of the soldiers. "She was all alone; we had to bring her. She seems to be very sick," he whispered.

"Bring her in, in here, my children," said the curé. "This is the refuge for all."

The mattress was carried in and deposited in a far corner, as much out of sight as possible. The woman was shaking with an ague and calling out in pain. The floor was covered with women sitting with their children about, many of them still undressed, and without shoes. The altar step was

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filled by kneeling ones, praying as if they dared not stop.

Catherine followed by Marie made her way to the sick woman. The covering had fallen from her face, which looked like a wax mask. She could not speak, but groaned and cried out from time to time in terrible agony.

"Go, my child," said Catherine to Marie, "and find the curé and ask him to come here."

Threading her way through the throng that covered the floor, Marie found him, his hands full of work finding places for the fugitives, bringing the children to order, and pushing aside intruders from the altar-rail. She gave him her message.

"In a moment, in a moment," he answered, not even looking at her.

"Mon père, I think it is urgent!"

"My child, everything is urgent today!"

"She may die, mon père!" she whispered.

"So may we all; and sooner than we expect," said the priest, showing that he, too, shared somewhat in the panic. "But I will come; I will come!" And he followed her as well as he could, avoiding hands stretched out to touch his robe. "Father, save us! Save us!"

"Say your prayers, say your prayers!" he called out to them, hurrying on.

"I am afraid you are too late, mon père!" whis-

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pered Catherine as he came to the group. The poor woman was lying on her back, not groaning any more; her face was peaceful and calm.

"God in heaven!" ejaculated the priest, going on his knees and peering into her face to see if her lips were not moving, if she were not really breathing. "Send for the sacristan," he ordered, and began to murmur the prayers for the dying.

Catherine held a bundle wrapped in clothes in her arms. She turned and gave it to Annette who was kneeling beside her. "Here, you take it!" she said.

The church was guarded to keep the women from straying away. Annette waited for a chance and slipped out of the side door and ran as if the Indians were after her across the street to her cabin. There, she crouched down against the fence until she could open the gate which was held by a rope. In an instant afterward she was in her house. When she came out, her bundle was no longer wrapped in an old bed-covering, but in a clean white cloth, one of her own petticoats, in truth. She looked around carefully, and saw that the door of her husband's workshop was open; and she ran again as if the Indians were after her, until she reached the corner of the fence, where the rough little smithy stood.

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Joseph, the edged-tool maker or armourer, had lost no time after the first hint given him by Madame Catherine, the hint picked up from Picot. Night and day he had worked at his business, and whatever else was lacking through the governor's carelessness, the guns were in order. The cannon, dating from the time of Iberville, had been smartened up into efficiency and stood ready for their gunners. The rifles and small guns, choked up by the miserable quality of the government powder, had been cleaned; pikes, swords, and cutlasses had been sharpened. The old arsenal, in short, had been freed of its useless débris and put in order. The garrison building had been resupplied with the cast-off implements. The cabins of the settlement had been visited, and the hunting guns found there had been put in order, and canisters filled with powder and shot. There was not a better armourer in America, as Bienville knew in his day as governor, and he prized Joseph as he did not many of the Council members, who were efficient only in talk.

When Annette entered the little smithy, Joseph had just put out the fire and was laying his tools in their places. He was still in his shirt-sleeves; his bare arms were black with soot up to the elbow, and his leathern apron was no cleaner than the floor under his feet.

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Annette came up to him. "Look," she said, "there was no one to take it but me."

"What?" asked Joseph in his gruff voice, as full of soot as his arms.

"A baby; a little baby!"

"What?" asked Joseph in a still gruffer voice.

Annette raised her eyes to his face, and her own voice grew softer and shyer.

"It was born only last night! The poor mother was lying in bed suffering all the pain—oh, such pain!—when the soldiers came. They took her up just as she was on her mattress and put her in a cart and brought her to the church, you know. It was damp and cold, a little rain falling. She was not covered enough. When she got to the church she was shivering and shaking with cold, and—she never got warm! She died right there in the church before us all, before even the curé could get to her."

"And—and—that!" Joseph pointed to the bundle that he would not name.

"Madame Catherine gave it to me to hold!"

"Why did she not give it to some one else?"

"She gave it to me!" was all Annette said. Tears were in her eyes, but she tried to keep them out of her voice. She moved away to the farthest corner she could get in, and sat down on a box there. She opened her bundle to peep at the baby,

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and laid her face close to it, bending over it, and opening her knees to make a lap for it.

"Bébé, bébé," she whispered, "poor little bébé! His father has been killed in the massacre, they told me." She did not look up, but kept her eyes fixed on the little face in her lap. "It looks a week old at least, it has had so much trouble!"

Joseph at last made up his mind to look at his wife; he looked at her again and again, his little black eyes peeping at her from under his heavy, bushy, black eyebrows. He had never, so it seemed to him, seen his wife before. Her face was changed, her eyes so tender; and bending, yearning over the little baby—a little baby she had picked up over there in the church. Not over her own, not over her own! That was the thought that struck him. How she must have waited and longed for a baby of her own! But she had never let him see it. No, working early and late for him; always cheerful, always happy—at least so it seemed to him. And all the time wanting a baby, a baby of her own to lie that way in her lap! To hold that way to her breast!

He smoked his short black pipe in silence. He did not want to talk; only to think about her, and how she had wanted a baby; and now she had one!

He came and sat by her side. "My poor girl, what do you know about babies?"

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"But I know all about them!" she answered, surprised at his ignorance. "My mother had so many, so many! The last was a little boy just like this one, and I raised him; my mother was so weak she could not do it!" And she bent again over the child in her lap. "He reminds me of my little brother, and I love him just the same!" She raised her face and looked at him.

"Annette, my girl, my poor girl! Keep him just as if he were yours. No one else would want him!"

She rose and now the tears rolled down her cheeks. "Oh, I am so glad! Just to keep him and nurse him! And you don't know how good that is, to hold him in my arms! Ah, Joseph, Joseph, how good you are to me! And how good God is!"

"Hum! Wait and see! Your baby may not be any better than your husband; your black, ugly husband!"

She leaned her head against him and he put his arms around her sturdy, strong little body and held her and the baby to his black, hairy breast.

She started. "Oh, I must go; I must go!"

"Back to the church?"

"Back to the church? You crazy man—back to the house! I must get clothes ready—for—my

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baby! I must go put him to sleep. He must be hungry, too. I must get him milk."

Joseph laughed; he had never seen her so happy. "And the Indians that are coming?"

"The Indians? Bah!" And she ran back to her little house.

And Joseph, the new father, picked up the box she had been sitting on, held it in his hands, considered it; shook his head approvingly and looked for some wood to make rockers.

Yes, he himself would make a cradle for it; he would show Annette. Poor girl, and she had been wanting that! Only a baby, a little scrap of a baby! He forgot his rusty locks and triggers; forgot the Indians; forgot all except the work before him.

"Poor girl, poor girl! And that is what she wanted! Well, it has come to her, whether"—he shrugged his shoulders—"from God or from the devil, who sends just as many babies into the world!"

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CHAPTER XV

UNDER the paralyzing fear of danger, complete and deathlike silence fell over the refugees in the church. They prayed, but with ears listening with agonizing strain for the alarm.

The good old priest celebrated his offices with feverish anxiety, stretching and clutching, as it were, at the robe of the Almighty, to hold Him near and to keep Him from forgetting them. The still, cold form in the corner of the church lay on the mattress and under the soiled coverlid it had used in life; with two miserable bits of candles sputtering to their extinction at the head and feet. A few women remained on their knees to pray; but what was one corpse more or less? They might all be the same in another twelve hours.

Marie Alorge, following Dame Catherine around in her practical administrations, thought not this way. She held Catherine's arm while she whispered into her ear. Catherine nodded assent.

"You are right, you are right! But do you not see that it is impossible at such a time?"

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"Oh, Dame Catherine, do not say that. It is our duty!"

"But, enfin, how can we? How can we get them?"

"I—I can go."

"You—you? You could not go outside. You would be afraid!"

"Give me the key, that is all. Oh, Dame Catherine" (reproachfully), "give me the key, that is all!"

The old woman, with hesitation, drew from her pocket the great iron key of her cabin door, and another hardly smaller in size.

"I—I would go myself, but there is too much to be done here. The curé has no help at all!"

"I will manage it all by myself; you will see!" Marie grasped the two keys and hurried away to the front door of the church.

With the help of some of the women she unbarred it and slipped out to the portico facing the square. She looked around, amazed to see the natural aspect of the place. The gloomy November day was ending in a pretty sunset. The sky over the river shone golden yellow and the river rolled along in golden ripples. All so quiet, so peaceful, so ordinary! There were no boats at the landing; and the streets were deserted; the houses closed and dismal looking, as if the worst

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had already taken place; no one moving, except in the Place d'Armes, where files of soldiers were marching around. A cannon had been placed by the flagstaff in readiness to fire. Hatchets and muskets were placed near by. All was in readiness. No surprise possible here! Marie Alorge felt for a moment what Dame Catherine had predicted, but only for a moment. Some thought came to her rescue that made her hold up her head defiantly and hurry down the church steps and turn in the direction of her cabin.

A sentinel stopped her; and while she was explaining herself to him, with nervous volubility and heightened colour, an officer approached and stopped to listen; without interfering. The major and commanding officer in the city, Mandeville de Marigny, he was.

Marie was, as she had rushed to the church at the first alarm, without even a head-covering. She looked at the soldier and even at the major without embarrassment.

The major, at a glance—so sharp were his eyes for feminine beauty (a noted trait of his historic family)—recognized the lovely face that had tempted him into what had been proven by De Loubois an indiscretion. She was intent only on her mission, with eyes fixed on Dame Catherine's cabin, to which she pointed as she spoke to the

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superb officer simply, as if he had been the sentinel at the church door.

"You must not go alone, madame!" the major addressed her. "We do not know what may happen at any moment! I will go with you and return you myself to the church!"

"Yes, yes," she answered eagerly, and they started off at once, together. He questioned her and she told him about the poor woman who had died and who lay in the corner of the church, alone, with no one to care for—appearances!

"Yes, madame, you are right," he answered gravely, and walked with her to the cabin and unlocked the door with the big iron key; and opened it wide, and stood on the step, hat in hand, while she went inside.

"Call me if you need me, madame."

"Oh, it will not take a moment," she answered, and it did not. She reappeared with one of Dame Catherine's great, heavy linen sheets and her two candlesticks from the mantelpiece, with their fresh wax candles. He took the sheet from her and threw it over his arm, and relieved her of one of the candlesticks. She had another bundle, that she held tight under her arm. They walked back as quickly as they came.

As they reached the church door, he started. "Good God, what is that?" Loud voices scream-

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ing and screeching seemed to fill the interior of the church.

"What?" asked Marie in alarm.

"Do you not hear? That screaming! What can have happened?" And he hastened his steps to the door.

"Oh, that is the children screaming for something to eat. They are hungry, and we have no food for them. Poor things!"

"No food! But why have you no food?"

"How could we bring food, when we were fleeing for our lives? If we could give them something to eat, they would be quiet and go to sleep. You know when one child cries, all the others join in. And there are so many there, we can do nothing with them."

"In truth, they sound like souls in purgatory! Wait for me here, madame, just a minute." He pushed open the door of the church, and while she went in, he stepped briskly away, beckoning to two soldiers to follow him.

Marie Alorge gave what she had brought to Dame Catherine, and she with the women praying near, dressed the poor woman, still in her soiled bed-clothes, in the clean linen in which, as they thought, she would appear in the other world. They spread the large sheet over her, and lighting the two candles, placed one at her head and one

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at her feet. She could not have been better cared for in her own home. And thus she lay in the dim church with its flickering light on the altar.

Marie Alorge stood at the door until all was finished. By that time the major appeared followed by the two soldiers, bearing great hampers. "I have brought all the bread that was stored in the barracks, and some milk, too, that I found in the cabarets. For God's sake feed those children and stop their misery. I would rather hear the Indians."

He looked around curiously in the church, and saw in its corner the sheeted form with its two candles. "Madame, could you find the curé for me? There is something more, I see, to be done."

The curé came, and listened with surprise to the major. He had not made any arrangements; how could he? He had not been able to think of the necessary arrangements; how could he with all these women and children on his hands? What difference would it make, anyway, if the Indians came!

"Ha!" said the officer, "you think so, but I do not! Tomorrow at daylight, Monsieur le Curé, I will be here with everything prepared." And he walked majestically away. The poor curé, having none of the officer's spirit in him, shambled to the sacristy.

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The screaming children, once fed, were put to sleep. Their mothers and the other women sat up with their backs to the wall keeping vigil all night, waiting for the expected massacre to begin. They could not pray any more, only fix their eyes on the altar and on the effigy of St. Louis, throning above it, a gallant, young, knightly figure, who the women were confident would help the colony, if he could; the colony that bore his name and cherished his glory.

At daylight, as he had promised, came the major, pushing the church door softly open. A file of soldiers entered behind, stilling the noise of their tread. They bore a coffin, made during the night. The poor sleeper of death was lifted into it, the white sheet folded around her.

The curé came up in haste in his vestments, with an acolyte he had managed to find before him bearing the crucifix. The major acted as sexton. The soldiers lowered the coffin into the grave that had been dug by the soldiers; the curé murmured his prayers and sprinkled the holy water; even a cross had not been forgotten, to be placed at the head of the grave. The soldiers saluted and marched away. The curé, with his frightened acolyte, hurried through the side door of the church. Dame Catherine and Marie Alorge prayed a few moments, and all was over!

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De la Chaise was pursuing his voyage of inspection up the river leisurely, as was his wont, dictating to his secretary, seated beside him, the result of his observations, when he was met with the news of the catastrophe at Natchez. Instead of retreating he hastened forward to reach the first French post on the river—the post of the Tunicas, whose commandant was the Chevalier de Loubois. He stopped there and remained for three days, awaiting the further expected developments on the part of the Indians, whose efforts to free themselves and their land from the yoke of the white man at one stroke had failed. The liquor found in the government stores had been their undoing. It accomplished more for the protection of the province than the soldiers with their arms and ammunition.

The noblest and most civilized of all the Southern Indians, after planning a great revolution and accomplishing the first step in it, in the hour of their triumph gave themselves over to gluttony and drunkenness, and their allies, the Choctaws and the Chickasaws, hastening with all their might to reinforce them and to share in the spoil, recoiled from them and began to parley with their enemies —for a time against them!

Ruin and devastation of the most beautiful village on the Mississippi, its fruitful soil soaked

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with human blood, and a few women and children captives were all their gain from the mighty effort.

To rescue the women and children was the first thought of the French. Périer with what troops he could rally hurried to the Natchez stronghold, and made a wild effort to destroy it. The Natchez escaped with most of their prisoners, and fled into the west, toward the Natchitoches country, where, in a strong position, they defied their enemies. Périer despatched the women and children he had rescued to New Orleans, and started in pursuit. Again a bloody fight took place, with the loss to the Natchez of all their prisoners and a number of their warriors and their wives. These were sent to New Orleans; the warriors with their families were sent by Périer to Santo Domingo, where they were sold into slavery.

De la Chaise pursued his voyage. Périer's boats passed him on their way to Natchez. De Loubois held to his position, to safeguard the city. From it he commanded the river and at the same time could prevent any movements of the Choctaws against the white settlements. He sent for the Choctaw chiefs, many of whom he had known from his early days at Fort Louis de la Mobile, and by his skilful management of them held them inert and, moreover, secured their assistance in

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the effort to deflect the Chickasaws from their fidelity to the Natchez.

"It is all a question of presents. If we can pay them more than the English, they will come to us. If the English can give more, they get them."

The chevalier and De la Chaise were seated on a fallen tree at the edge of the forest, whence they could see the full course of the river, sweeping around a great bend spreading out like a lake.

"You do not expect peace soon, then?" asked the councillor.

"God knows!" The chevalier shrugged his shoulders. "It depends on the government in France and how much force they can send us. You can see for yourself how our affairs stand."

"If Bienville were here——" suggested the councillor.

"If Bienville were here," interrupted the chevalier. "In the first place it would not have happened, if he had been here. He understood the Natchez and he would have known how to deal with such vermin as this Chepar."

The councillor looked admiringly over the great expanse of the river and its heavily wooded banks.

"It is a country well worth paying a good price for, and France must pay it," he said decisively.

"We have held it for thirty years at a very cheap price for France!" There was a tone of bitterness

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in the chevalier's voice. "Bienville should never have been recalled!" He spoke what he felt against the man who had counselled that recall. "And if France is to hold this country, Bienville should be sent back," he added with firmness.

"If France is to hold this country!" De la Chaise repeated. "And you, chevalier, what need of Bienville if you are here?"

De Loubois saw his meaning. "Monsieur does not know Bienville," he said simply.

De la Chaise let his eyes rest on the young man with an expression of profound interest. "No, that is true; I do not know Bienville; nor you, monsieur!"

"I?" The chevalier shrugged his shoulders. Three days of enforced companionship with this very superior man, whom he sincerely distrusted, wearied the chevalier inexpressibly, and he frankly longed for an interruption to the conversation.

De la Chaise, astute as he undoubtedly was, must have noticed this, but his training had inured him to the weariness of the less sophisticated than himself. Those who were like him intellectually, of course, never wearied him in conversation.

As Picot had reported to Dame Catherine, the young man was very much changed. Robust as ever in health, and with his usual appearance of athletic strength, he was nevertheless very much

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changed. The light gaiety that had always animated his face, like a ray of sunshine, was overcast by a permanent cloud. He was no longer vivacious, but serious. His mobile lips under the smart moustache were fixed and determined. He was no longer the man who had danced the minuet so light-heartedly the Christmas before, who had played so merrily with the kitten!

Monsieur de la Chaise took note of it and mentioned it. "I find you very much changed, Monsieur le Chevalier. Is anything the matter with you? Physically, I mean."

"No, monseigneur; physically, as you say, I am in perfect health."

"It is strange," remarked the councillor, "of how small account the physical is, when we have cares. They corrode the life of the face!"

His own face, that should have been handsome still, for he was still a young man, showed the evidence of the truth of his remark. It was seamed and crossed with the fine lines of care; and his expression, that once must have been attractive, was now hardened from its mobility by thought, burden, and preoccupation with grave considerations; and his lips had been forced so long into the service of his profession, that they had become deformed into the stiff effigy, as it were, of a royal councillor; than whom no man is more weaned

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from the softness of inherent nature, unlearning all the graces of youth.

But De la Chaise, indifferent to the effect he produced upon others, was concerned with the subject on his mind, which was not the recent outbreak among the Indians. "Monsieur le Chevalier, may I ask how old you are?"

"Twenty-five." "Now what the devil is he up to now?" was the thought that accompanied the answer.

"And I am forty; a generation ahead of you! Fifteen years of life between us. I would that I could change with you, Monsieur le Chevalier!"

The chevalier shrugged his shoulders; he hated a conversation that had no clear object in view.

"And you have been in the province since—since——."

"Since I was fifteen, monseigneur."

"Yes, yes, I remember that is so! And when do you expect to leave the province—to return to France?"

"I am stationed here, monseigneur. I cannot return to France when I wish."

"But you do not wish to return to France?"

"No, I have no wish to return to France!"

"Permit me to tell you that I have it in my power to send you to France by the next ship; with

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despatches, important despatches, concerning the Natchez."

"Your report would be useful to the colonial ministers. I do not care to return to France, monseigneur. Send some one else."

"But that is surprising! A young man of twenty-five at the beginning of his career, who could aspire to swift promotion in his profession, and a future to satisfy any ambition, I assure you!"

"I am satisfied here, monseigneur."

"You have a home over there; a family, a mother."

"Louisiana suits me. I do not care to leave it."

The keen eyes of the councillor saw minute signs of an effort to control nervousness and master emotion.

"Ah," he said politely and gently, "Louisiana is fortunate to have inspired such loyalty." And he lowered his voice to speak even more gently.

"I have had the same refusal from one even younger than you, Monsieur le Chevalier, one who has no reason to love the province, and every reason to return to her native country; who has even more to expect from a life there than you. A young woman, beautiful and charming in the extreme, endowed, in my opinion, with the most irresistible gifts of pleasing—La Dame de Sainte Hermine! You know her, and how she was sent here under

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the most unfortunate circumstances. I offered to send her back to France. I had it in my power to offer her a good, comfortable, and easy passage to her own country and people."

"And she?" the chevalier asked with an effort at indifference.

The councillor would not look at him then, although his curiosity urged him to do so. "Oh, she refused, just as you have refused: 'I do not care to return; I prefer to stay here.' Strange, strange, she said that. Forcibly, unalterably!"

"And you? What did you say to her?"

"I, Monsieur le Chevalier? Do you wish to know what I said? By Heaven, I will tell you! Why not? I kissed her on the forehead and I said: 'My child, you are right, you are right! God bless you! and He will bless you.' Just as I say to you: 'My son, you are right! God bless you!' " He arose from his seat to walk away.

The chevalier seized his hand. "Monseigneur, I beg your pardon. I have done you injustice in my thoughts. I understand you now! But, monseigneur, you have more to say to me; let me hear it—anything that could help me; for indeed, monseigneur, I am troubled almost beyond my strength!"

The councillor sat down again on the log and held the chevalier's hand as he committed the crime

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of a councillor's life; that is, an indiscretion. He related the visit Marie Alorge had paid him, and the subsequent visit of the repentant Dame Catherine; repeating every word that she had told him; not in his official, over-elegant language, but in the simple language that the chevalier loved.

"My boy," so the stately man concluded, "my boy—you are a boy to me—you ask my advice, as you will never need it in your life again; and I want to give it to you—the advice that comes from my long life! Believe me, believe me, love comes to us once only in life, once only. And the one supreme regret in life comes from slighting love, from thinking we can do without it!" He shook his head. "I know, I know, and I want to save you, to save her!"

"But the Church, monseigneur, the Church!"

"The Church, the Church! What avails the Church in a long life with a broken heart? The Church, the Church!" And he sank again into his reflections.

"When Dame Catherine talked to me, monseigneur, I felt that she was right. So I took my departure, as my honour bade me do."

The councillor nodded. "You are right, chevalier, as a gentleman of honour. But now I have something to tell you, as important as what Dame Catherine told you. I have made my investiga-

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tions in France, as I told Monsieur de Bienville I would do. Unfortunately, my answer has come too late to communicate to him. The young lady was so helpless, so lovely, so unfortunate that from the first she appealed to my heart; and I made her affair my own; but, in truth, had she been old, ugly, and abominable in every way, I would have felt it my duty, as an officer of justice, to intervene in her behalf.

"Contrary to my first opinion, I find the lettre de cachet of more importance than the marriage. The lettre de cachet is fixed against her; I could do nothing against that. But the marriage"—he hesitated—"she is released from that by a natural process that we must recognize."

"How, how?" the chevalier forced himself to ask.

"In one word, monsieur, he, who was legally no husband at all, is a fugitive from justice; and she is abandoned by him. I will explain.

"It was carried out in good faith, on her part, as far as the ceremony was concerned. You know what followed. With the bride safely disposed of in Louisiana, the road to wealth and prosperity seemed clear to the old uncle. Without ceremony he took possession of all her property. His son, however, not such an idiot as he imagined, claimed his rights, and would have received them but for

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the old man's determination not to give up a cent of what he had grabbed.

"There was a quarrel, and I hear, in fact, a struggle between them. The young fellow mastered his father, robbed him of the ready money. The father died of the struggle, both mental and physical, but not before appealing to the courts of law. The son, to all appearances, was in complete possession of the Sainte Hermine estate.

"However, he reckoned without the law. He was summoned to the court by the authorities, and was charged with assault on his father resulting in his death. The property was put under seal, and gendarmes were sent to arrest him. Frightened out of his limited senses, he ran and made his escape and is now a fugitive from justice, in hiding somewhere, it is presumed, in some distant corner of France; from thence he will never dare emerge. La Dame de Sainte Hermine is therefore freed from him and from her marriage, and is at liberty to dispose of her future life as she wishes! Her money, however, is practically gone from her forever. Here or in France, she is condemned to a life of poverty. If she returns to France, however, let me say I would have arranged for her comfort in the house of a widowed sister of mine, living in Paris, where she would have enjoyed independence."

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"Did she know this?"

"I tried to explain it to her, to make her understand; but she was so much preoccupied with what she had to communicate to me, that she paid no attention to what I said. I doubt if she heard me."

As the chevalier gazed before him, the dull, ugly view that he had learned to loathe, in his three months' encampment there, changed as by a miracle. It became bright and beautiful, and the river ran in joyful currents through it, its sallow waters gleaming as though filled with precious stones. And his own face changed, its listless, disappointed expression dropping from it like a mask. His lips curved in smiles again; his eyes gleamed with their old spirit; he felt gay once more; his heart leaped and frisked like a welcoming animal pet.

"Ah, monseigneur, God Himself could not have done more for me!"

"There is still more for God—or me—to do, monsieur. The priest of the parish must be enlightened; we must enlist him on our side!"

But the young man, gazing like a saint on a vision of heaven, was not listening to him; so he rose and walked away; without, in truth, the chevalier perceiving it.

The councillor pursued his voyage the next day,

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accompanied by Loubois and the force summoned by Périer to join him at the Natchez settlement.

Siege was laid to the strong fort to which the Natchez had retreated. After a gallant resistance, the warriors were forced to a parley, in which they agreed to surrender their French captives. When the gates were opened to effect this, all the Frenchmen confined in the fort made a rush and most of them managed to reach the French lines alive. That night the warriors made their escape from the fort to the river, which they crossed, and by a forced march reached the Ouachita country in the west, where they made another stand. Driven from that, they retreated to the river, recrossed it, and still distancing their pursuers, were able to reach the refuge of the strong Chickasaw villages in the northeast.

Périer returned in triumph with the women and the warriors he had captured. The warriors he sold into slavery in Santo Domingo. Some of the women he burned in the Place d'Armes in New Orleans.

In the meantime the French women and children rescued from the Indians were expedited to New Orleans in barges, under a strong escort. When they arrived in New Orleans, they found the banks of the river thronged with men and women to receive them. Even the rich ladies and gentle-

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men from the plantations on the bayou and on the river came to look at them.

It was a mournful sight; a cry of pity broke from the onlookers when they saw the poor women stagger from the boats, their clothing in rags, their hair hanging in disorder over their haggard white faces. Most of them had children in their arms. For three days and three nights the rowers had sped the barges down the stream without stopping even for meals. The rowers themselves were spent from fatigue and hunger.

The Ursuline nuns opened the doors of their great new convent to give shelter to the women and children, sending the sick to the hospital under their charge; others brought bowls of wine and milk to give them strength to raise their heads.

At the end of the disembarkation, a tall man from the last barge rose, holding the hand of a little girl, about ten years of age. He picked his way through the throng, and turned down the street that led to the convent. No one knew his name, only that he was called "le Parisien," and that he had not been in the province very long before the massacre. Sent to Natchez and placed in a company there, he had proved a good soldier. When the Indians made their rush upon the garrison, he happened to be out of the fort. At the first alarm

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he ran to it; he had his gun on his arm, but could do nothing; he was too late!

But from a hiding-place he heard a wild shriek: "Monsieur le Parisien! Help, help!" And there almost under his feet, an Indian was dragging away a little girl by the hair! The child struggled and screamed; but the Indian dragged her on, through the blood and the carnage!

Le Parisien stepped out, aimed his rifle, and shot the Indian in the back, ran forward, picked up the little girl, and in quicker time than it takes to relate it, he had run with her into the shelter of the woods.

The Natchez being too busy with their looting and scalping to notice anything else, the young soldier made his way to the river, and found a boat that he could push from the bank. He put the child in the bottom of it, and paddled to mid-stream.

He was picked up by barges and brought to the city; the little girl clinging to him as if he were the father and mother that she had seen shot down and scalped! He tied his red handkerchief over her head to shield her from the night air, and soothed her and wiped away her tears, as if he had been a woman. He took her to the convent and put her in the charge of one of the Sisters, not as a refugee, but as a boarder, paying

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for her in advance. She was to be kept there, he said, until the Sisters gave him permission to take her away and marry her.

"Madame Catherine," said Marie Alorge, who had been among the onlookers, "do you know what I heard, and saw the proof of it with my own eyes? Many of those poor women are already in love with, and engaged to be married to, the soldiers who brought them here!"

"Ah," said Madame Catherine drily, "that is the way with women; they cannot help it!"

"But their husbands are just dead! They saw them killed with their own eyes!"

Dame Catherine shrugged her shoulders.

"God has been very good to us, Dame Catherine!" Marie Alorge continued sadly.

"Well, if He wishes it, we cannot say anything!"

"No, that is true; but all the same, I wish the women had waited a little."

Another man left the barge after le Parisien, but he slipped away from the throng, and took the direction towards Monsieur de la Chaise's house. This man was Picot. His uniform was no longer smart and well kept; but soiled, ragged, and muddy; and he himself showed the hard work and vicissitudes of the three months past. His errand to Monsieur de la Chaise accomplished, he waited in the street until Dame Catherine had left

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her cabin before he presented himself to Madame Sainte Hermine.

She was seated in her accustomed place on the gallery, sunk in thought upon all she had seen and heard that morning, and particularly on Dame Catherine's fiat on women.

"Madame, madame!" said Picot in a whisper. She started and failed to recognize him.

"I am Picot, the valet of Monsieur le Chevalier!"

"How did you come here?"

"Monsieur le Chevalier sent me."

"You want to see Madame Catherine?"

"No, madame, not particularly. I am going back tonight."

"Going back? Where?"

"But to Monsieur le Chevalier. To my company!"

"Where is that?"

"God knows, madame! Somewhere as close to the Natchez Indians as we can get. The chevalier has been left in command to keep up his pursuit of them as long as Monsieur Périer is away."

"Where is Monsieur Périer?"

"Oh, he is in the city, madame. He had to come to send his report to France and to consult with the Superior Council about the conduct of the war."

"Is Monseigneur de la Chaise here, too?"

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"Oh, yes, madame; he came back with the governor."

"Picot," said the lady with the severe decision of Dame Catherine, "tell me what it is you want to say to me."

"I thought, madame—I may be mistaken—but I thought I would bring you the news from Monsieur le Chevalier!"

"You did not come to the city just for that!"

"No, madame, that is true. I came—that is, I was sent with a letter to Monseigneur de la Chaise from Monsieur le Chevalier."

"Ah!"

"And monseigneur said: 'Picot, I think that Madame de Sainte Hermine would like to hear the news from Monsieur le Chevalier. You go to her, and return to me for the answer to Monsieur le Chevalier's letter.' "

"And what is the news from him, Picot?"

Picot was standing on the ground. He shifted his position so that the gallery post would not interfere with his view of the lady's face.

"Madame, Monsieur le Chevalier is well; I cannot deny that. But for two months he has been fighting the Indians; and I may say, madame, that it is he who has saved the province. Night and day he has been on duty, without sleep, so to speak, and with very little food. He has marched us

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on the track of the Indians until we are worn out; but he is never tired! The Indians are afraid of him, as they were afraid of Monsieur de Bienville. There is not another officer like him in the country! Madame, I have brought you this." He drew a packet from his shabby coat pocket.

"Did Monsieur le Chevalier send it to me?"

"In truth, no, madame. But I know the mind of Monsieur le Chevalier, madame, as well as he knows it himself! Madame, will you take it? And—madame, you will send him a token in return?"

Picot's voice was pleading to tears. "Think, madame, of all he has suffered. Of all his trials—his dangers! Madame, you do not know what the chevalier has been to me. He has been like the Saviour Christ for goodness! I would go any length to serve him."

"Even to lying?" enquired the lady.

"Lying, madame, is a small service. More than that, I would give my life for him! Ask Madame Catherine; ask her what he has done for me. Madame, you will take this from me?" He reached the packet to her again.

She took it and opened it. It contained, wrapped in a handkerchief, a little flower—a wild flower picked in the woods.

"Madame, he picked that as we were march-

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ing along after the Indians, and he put it in the pocket of his coat afterward; and I thought—I thought——"

"And you thought right, my friend!"

"If he had been killed, as he might have been"—his voice breaking—"that flower, madame, would have been over his heart!"

She jumped from her chair impulsively. Thrusting the little flower into her dress she left him for a moment and returned with a small package. It was her own handkerchief, marked "Marie Alorge." In it she had placed some scattered leaves of a red rose.

"Give him this, and you will tell him——" But she could not continue. Madame Catherine had returned and was noisily shutting the door behind her.

"Thank you, madame," said Picot, turning to walk away.

But Madame Catherine had seen him. She called out: "Wait, Picot, I want to speak to you! Now"—taking a seat—"tell me the news. What were you all doing against the Natchez?"

"Ah, Dame Catherine," he answered mournfully, "I am afraid the Natchez are doing more against us than we can do against them."

"I don't believe that."

"Well, Dame Catherine, the Superior Council

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is sitting now with the governor to find out some way of carrying on the war against them. You ask any of the gentlemen of the Council! Ask Monseigneur de la Chaise!"

"You must think I am as great a fool as you are, Picot!"

He shrugged his shoulders and took a few steps away.

"How is the chevalier?"

"I have just told madame the chevalier is the one who has saved the province. If it were not for him, Madame Catherine, we would all, at this moment, be in paradise, instead of in New Orleans!"

"Tiens, tiens! You think that? And who else thinks it? Not Monsieur le Chevalier, I warrant."

"Ah, Madame Catherine, the poor Monsieur le Chevalier! It is not in paradise he would be, but in heaven itself! God could not keep from rewarding him for all he has done for the French armies!"

"He is well, I suppose?"

"No, Madame Catherine, he is not well, except in body. He is troubled, he is grieved, about something. He has lost all interest in everything, except fighting the Indians!"

"Well, that is the best for him, after all. But what are you hurrying away for?"

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"I have to take back a letter from Monseigneur de la Chaise, in answer to the letter Monsieur le Chevalier wrote to him."

"If that is so, you had better hurry along!"

"Adieu, Madame Catherine!"

"Adieu, Picot! Et bon voyage! Tell the chevalier, from me, to come back as soon as he can!"

Picot left. He had accomplished what he had set out from the camp to do, what he had decided in his own mind should be done, although his master charged him to see and speak to no one but Monseigneur de la Chaise. "But what," as he was in the habit of saying to himself, "did the good God give me sense for, if not to help those who have less sense than myself!"

He went to the house of the lord of the Superior Council, and received from him a letter for the chevalier. An official communication of importance had been sent by an official messenger.

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CHAPTER XVI

ANNETTE came, bringing a basket of figs to Dame Catherine. She had her baby in her arms, and sat down on the steps a moment before going away. "No, madame," she answered to a question of Madame de Sainte Hermine, "I do not need you to write another letter for me. No one answers my letters, and I see I am forgotten by my father and mother; they do not care to write to me. And now God has sent me some one to love over here; and, in fact, I do not care for them so much, either."

She looked at the baby in her arms, so clean and white; dressed in a clean calico slip, with a white cotton cap tied tight over its round head. But the love that beamed upon it from her eyes was mingled with tears, that fell in regret for her family and her old home, as if, in her heart, the baby touched a sore place, reminding her of her little brother that she used to nurse.

"But, madame, there is something I want to ask you; it has been in my mind for some time. I want—I want——" She paused to seek words

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for her request. "I want to ask if you will teach me to read and write; that is, if you do not find me too old and stupid. I believe I could learn my letters, now, if you would teach me—with the help of the blessed Virgin." She still held back something she wanted to say. "You see, madame, it's baby. I would want to teach him; and I would not want him to know that I could not read and write."

"But how old is he, Annette?"

"He is three months old, madame. See how big he is!" She held him up to show him. "And he is growing so fast! And, madame, think how ashamed he would be to find out that his mother could not read or write! And how ashamed I would be! So, madame, I thought I would come and ask you to teach me!"

Her eyes were troubled, and over the thick skin of her face the blushes of embarrassment came and went. "I have never cared so much before, but now!" She took up the baby's chubby hand and kissed it again and again. "See, madame, he knows me already! He is so bright! My husband says that he has never seen a child so bright for his age! Would you believe it, madame, he knows my husband already, and smiles at him! Smile for madame, smile!" she addressed the baby. "Fais la risette!" And in truth, aided by her chuck-

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ing him under his chin, he did smile a good broad smile.

"You see that is the way he smiles at my husband, who looks at him with big eyes, for he cannot believe it—that he has a child to smile at him. Think, madame, think! The poor man has wanted a child all his life; his heart was hungry for one! That is really what he wanted in his hard, black, sooty life! I cannot believe it. A child, a little baby—to hold his finger and go to sleep in his arms! The poor man!" And she smiled as if to herself. "And he is not bad-tempered any more; he laughs and talks to me and the baby all the time! And just think, madame, how bad my poor father was to my mother, at the sight of her children. And he had so many of them! If they could have made him happy, he would have been the happiest man in France. Instead of which——" She paused, and then went on in her simple, earnest way: "My husband says he will teach him to be a locksmith, for that is better than an edged-tool maker, and the work is not so hard. An edged-tool maker has not so much to do, when there are no soldiers; and he says soon there will be no use for soldiers here. The Indians will be driven away, and France will settle down in Louisiana, in contentment; and the rich men will come and build their big houses like they are doing already, and

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bring fine furniture here; and they will need locksmiths! Every night we sit up and talk about it all, and what we are going to do for our baby! He seems to be more our child than if he were born to us! He will never know that we are not his real father and mother. Oh, that we have decided on. It would make him too unhappy to know about his poor father being killed by the Indians, and his poor mother dying on the floor of the church! My husband says he was a good man, the father, and the poor mother was an honest woman; there was nothing against her. She was honest and hard-working. At first I was afraid my husband would not like my keeping the baby. But no, he loves it as much as I do now! I never thought that he would care for a baby. My God! how could I tell such a thing? He was so cross and hot-tempered. See what a fine baby he is!" She held him up. "He is going to be a big man, my husband says; not a little, ugly specimen as he is! But, you know, madame, I do not think him so ugly now. I think he is as good looking as anybody in the colony.

"He told me, madame, that his father was a tall, handsome man; he was in the grenadiers. He was so handsome that all the women ran after him. His mother ran after him and got him. And then she had a baby: my poor husband. The father wanted to beat her, he was so mad with her, and she

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wanted to beat the baby when her husband beat her. And that was the way at his home. And he never had enough to eat until he came to Louisiana; he never remembers eating enough to satisfy his hunger. When he tells me about it I cry; it reminds me of my own home. And I thank God for sending me to him. And so, madame, we learned how to love babies and when I think of his childhood I am kinder to him than ever and cook more and more good things for him to eat. We have learned how children ought to be treated. Our baby is going to have plenty to eat, I promise you. And he will never need to be beaten; he is so good he never cries, he sleeps all night, and he never has been sick a moment since he came to us." She fondled and kissed the impassive face. "And he is going to church like a Christian and learn his catechism and make his first communion, and when he gets married——"

"But, my good girl," interrupted Madame Sainte Hermine, "don't marry him off so soon; he has plenty of time yet!"

"Ah, madame, you do not know! My husband says that the only way to keep men good is to marry them as soon as possible. And we know he will be good looking, and all the women will be running after him—you know how women are! But our son will be too good for them; I am sure he will

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be too good. But, you know, madame, when I say anything like that, my husband thinks I want to make a priest of the baby! And he hates the priests. Isn't it strange that women like the priests and the men hate them? And he says he thinks it is a good thing for a young man to start life in this country, instead of in France where life is so hard for working people. And I suppose he is right about it. I do not like the baby to hear him when he talks against the priests. I always take him away and put him to sleep when Joseph talks. Not that I tell Joseph he is wrong. Oh, no! A wife must not have a different opinion from her husband. I have found that out! And now I must go, madame. I only came to bring you and Madame Catherine a basket of figs. They are so fine now. My husband got the cuttings from Havana. He knows all about fruit trees. God knows how, in his trade! He is going to get orange trees, too, from Havana. He says the baby will inherit an orchard with the house from us. I tell him he looks ahead too far! Fig trees and orange trees, strawberries, a cow, chickens, a pig—oh, la, la! But he says baby can't look forward for himself and we must do it for him. Au revoir, madame, and thank you for promising to teach me to read and write. You are very good to me and to baby, too, as I say. Adieu, madame!"

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CHAPTER XVII

IN accordance with the orders sent out by the Superior Council, De Loubois returned to the city with all secrecy and despatch, concealing the abandonment of the camp at the Tunicas from the Indians, who found out too late to profit by the fact.

With muffled oars the barges conveying him and his men arrived at the landing at the city—so quietly, during the night, that had they been the enemy, they could have captured it in its sleep. With great indignation he aroused the sentinels, and arrested them and had them locked up in the barracks jail, before he went to the house of the governor, to make his report.

Marie Alorge sat in the cool shade of the garden, enjoying the early summer morn. The blue and white sky, peaceful and holy in its purity and serenity, lay far above the top of the great magnolia.

The sweet perfume of the flowers, the soft fragrance of the breeze playing in the loose curls of her hair—she was unconscious of it. Her

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thoughts far away from it all, above it all, were straying in heedless freedom over a garden that, for all she knew, lay just under the blue heavens; a garden in which the thoughts of young women can always find pleasure. It had its flowers, its blue and white sky, and its fragrant breezes, too. Over it her thoughts flitted like birds.

It was no earthly scene that she looked upon through her half-shut eyes; she knew that by a serene happiness such as she had never felt before, save in rare moments, when alone with nature, or when she had the fever dreams that were like heaven to her! The memory of the château came and went; the convent life; the harsh, ugly uncle and that puzzling picture of standing before the altar with a strange man, who took her hand; the vague assent she gave to the murmured words of the priest, whom she did not understand; the château again; the good nurse. And then—and then—— She could not hold to any of these things. They slipped through her fingers like sand. But what did not slip through was so large, it filled her grasp! The ship, the rough crossing, sailing and sailing, day after day! And the long illness; and then—and then—— Ah, she was coming to it at last; sitting in the big chair before Dame Catherine's window; her head on a pillow, her eyes closed, her hand hanging down. She felt—ah, yes,

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she could feel it still—the lifting of her hand in a firm grasp and lips touching it, and the words: "Madame, I will be to you the brother that you have not!" How quickly the other thoughts faded away before this one! Shadows—they were, phantoms.

And after that—day by day, the same firm hand, the same beautiful voice that brought her hope and safety! As he lifted her into the boat, she forgot her fear. Day by day, he came and went; as he came and went on that beautiful plane above, so close to heaven!

Her eyes, the eyes of her heart, followed him and followed him, stretching their vision to keep close to him; hoping that he would turn and speak to her from that other world above her. Yes, he did turn! He was going to speak to her! Quickly, so quickly, he fell on his knees before her, and his lips pressed her hands as gently as if they were flowers, red roses, and she heard him murmur: "Marie! Marie Alorge!"

She did not speak, she could not! She must rise and fly from that dream; but she could not! He held her hands.

"You, you!" she whispered, trying to rise. "You!"

Her heart had been starved on convent diet, weighted down with the chains fastened upon it;

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her imagination had been nipped and cut back to prevent its flowering. But now, all at once, the manacles fell, her heart felt strong and joyful. She lifted her hands and put her arms around his neck, and sank her face upon his breast, while the blue sky above came down and enveloped them both; and smiles such as she had never known broke like sunlight from her heart to irradiate her eyes and lips.

"Marie Alorge!" he whispered, his lips touching her ear, "Marie Alorge, will you accept me for your husband?" His voice was timid and trembling—but not hers!

"Yes! Oh, yes!"

Taking her hand, the chevalier led her into the house.

"Dame Catherine," he announced to the old woman, "you must give us your blessing! We are going to be married!"

In spite of the wise counsel of monseigneur, and of his drilling of her, Dame Catherine started and, forgetting her lesson, asked, "When did you come, chevalier?"

"Dame Catherine"—plucking her sleeve—"you did not understand. Marie Alorge has accepted me for her husband! Get on your knees and thank God for me!"

"You had better thank Him for yourself!"

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The sitting of the Superior Council had been a long and uneasy one. Governor Périer presided, as was his duty, over a full board.

Gruff and bold of manner, and disagreeable to his officials, and therefore disliked, he was nevertheless a good and brave soldier, but as he had proved, even to himself, he did not possess the military qualifications for Indian warfare. And the critical position of the colony, weak and almost defenseless, and trembling on the verge of destruction, was undoubtedly owing to his mismanagement.

Bitterness and complaint and sharp criticism had not been spared him by his board. His prompt appeal to France for arms and men at the beginning of the trouble was approved. Not the usual recruits sent to the colony, he had prayed for; not the good-for-naughts of all kinds picked up in the streets of Paris, undisciplinable and to a man too cowardly to stand up against a foe and fight, but soldiers from the regular army, commanded by competent officers and provided with ammunition that could be depended on.

The Council board nodded in approval at this communication and each one began to mutter his own opinion of the vagabonds sent out to the colony as soldiers. But until the reinforcements arrived what was to become of the colony? And how was

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New Orleans to be defended? was boldly asked him.

The enemies of Bienville were at the Council board, and there was not one present who had not allowed his jealousy and ill feeling against the Canadian to push him into an enmity to him which caused his recall. Now, as each one saw, the petty peculations that formed the ground of their complaints against the old governor were of no more than a feather's weight against his ability to dominate the Indians and maintain peace on his own terms with them—the ability in which his successor was so lamentably lacking, as they made the disgraced Périer feel.

De la Chaise, who was second in rank when the governor was present, listened and observed with acute ears and eyes, learning more of the government of Louisiana, and of its governor, during this deliberation, if it could be so called, than six months of legal examinations and study of ledgers had taught him. And incidentally, he became acquainted with the true character of Bienville, and of his value to the colony.

"Sirs," he interrupted the angry wrangling, "the Chevalier de Loubois alone can give us the information we need, to guide us through this crisis!"

"He has been notified to attend this meeting," said Périer quickly, "and I have sent for him;

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but I will send for him again!" And he despatched a second peremptory message. The recriminations and bickerings began again while De la Chaise took his notes coolly and carefully.

The appearance of the chevalier, in his uniform, saluting them; his look of strong energy and efficient intelligence, nerved all hearts to renewed alertness before the true responsibility of the moment, and to forgetfulness of Périer's past lack of judgment.

"Sirs," began the chevalier with military promptitude, "the trouble with the Natchez is not a danger to be feared. The Natchez are already prepared to make terms with us. It is war with the Chickasaws that is our greatest problem. The Natchez have fled to them for refuge. We have demanded that the Chickasaws give them up to punishment. The Chickasaws have refused. And this involves us in a war with all the allies of the Chickasaws; that is the danger before us. We have made the issue and we must meet it. We cannot avoid it and keep our prestige with the Indians."

"But who made the issue?" Périer saw the question on the lips of all around the board.

"The Chickasaws," continued De Loubois, firmly looking over the heads of them all, "do not stand alone, strong as they are. They have the English behind them supporting them against us. It is the

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opportunity they have been waiting for ever since we have been in the province. Monsieur de Bienville recognized this, and strove against it. English officers are with the Chickasaws now, preparing them for the fight; their engineers are fortifying their camps. They are well supplied by the English with arms and ammunition."

"But the Choctaws," retorted Périer hotly. "The Choctaws are with us."

"Yes, for the present. We can count on them as long as we can pay them. To keep them with us, we must give them presents and hold to their chiefs."

"In Bienville's time," murmured one of the councilmen quite audibly, "we always had presents to give the Indians."

"The Sieur de Bienville," Loubois answered him, "the Sieur de Bienville understood the Indians. He could hold them even without presents. They were afraid of him and they trusted him. He could have held the Natchez. Even after the massacre he could have dominated them."

"How?" asked Périer.

"By treating them firmly and justly. They would have given to him the heads of the conspiracy, as they did once before."

All around the board understood his reference to the selling of the Indian prisoners as slaves in

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Santo Domingo, an unheard-of humiliation to the Indian warriors, and the public burning of three warriors and two women in the Place d'Armes, as the five hideous black spots on the greensward showed. Black spots which, the colonials said, could never be wiped off the good name of the city. Had De Loubois been in the city, so the current opinion ran, Périer would not have been permitted to carry out his terrible vengeance, which showed him to be as barbarous as the Indians themselves.

"I have armed all the little tribes against the Natchez, who, you must allow, have been driven out of the colony."

"Yes, to the Chickasaws and the English!" retorted De Loubois quickly.

De la Chaise put a question to the officer, in the interest of good understanding; after which he was asked to retire until the adoption by the Council of some line of action.

When he was recalled, Périer in a little speech which he stiffened with military authority, informed him that it had been decided, as a means of holding the Choctaws to their allegiance to the French, a strong force was necessary in Mobile, whence roads led into their country.

This force, commanded by an officer of tried experience and courage, could hold the Alabama

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country firm to the government, even though Louisiana should be lost. This officer, as the board had decided unanimously, could be no other than De Loubois. None other in the colony was fit for such a position; he and his company were ordered to leave for Mobile by the ship which even now lay at the wharf, ready to sail. De Loubois, with a hasty glance at De la Chaise, saluted and retired.

The Council then adjourned, the councillors leaving the room hastily to avoid further incriminating intercourse with one another.

De la Chaise arranged his notes in his portfolio, and with his usual deliberate tread, walked out of the door. At the street he saw De Loubois waiting for him, a haughty look of fixed resentment on his face.

"Monsieur le Chevalier," said De la Chaise to him, "as you saw yourself, there was nothing else to do."

"That is what troubles me, monseigneur," answered De Loubois coldly.

De la Chaise, glancing at his face, saw rather more than the chevalier intended. "Come with me to my house," he said gently, taking his arm.

It was not far, to the corner of Chartres Street, diagonally across. There, in his handsome room, the councillor removed his hat, laid aside the port-

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folio he carried, and sat down beside the chevalier. "We must talk it over."

"There is nothing to talk over, monseigneur. I go to Mobile the day after tomorrow." His face was white with repressed feeling.

"That, my dear chevalier, that is what I want to talk to you about."

The chevalier shrugged his shoulders. "There is nothing to be done!" he said stonily.

But De la Chaise, not to be rebuffed, repeated, "Let us see what we can do!"

"Nothing can be done." The chevalier's tone of voice was ominous.

"That is an expression men should never use! Whatever is humanly possible, we can do."

"Monseigneur"—the chevalier looked at him with eyes of the deepest sadness—"you do not understand."

"My dear chevalier, I do understand. I understand perfectly; as well as you, or I may say better. Listen to me! Your ship leaves the day after tomorrow at daylight. Good! You depart on it with your men."

The chevalier looked at him uncomprehendingly, and started to reply, but checked himself.

The councillor proceeded quietly and convincingly: "When you depart, why not take your bride with you?"

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A smile of painful derision was his answer.

"Now listen to me! Let me make our arrangements, or rather let me make them for you. To-morrow night the ceremony of marriage is quietly and discreetly performed, between Madame de Sainte Hermine and you, at Dame Catherine's."

The chevalier drew himself up proudly. "I would not ask Madame de Sainte Hermine to marry me privately!"

"Well answered, my dear chevalier," said the patient councillor. "You are perfectly right. The dignity of Madame de Sainte Hermine must not be slighted. You are right, but bear in mind that Madame de Sainte Hermine is no longer the simple, ignorant young girl that came to Louisiana, dumb and powerless before persecution. She is a woman now, grown and developed; more beautiful than before and more intelligent. She understands things now; and remember," continued the patient councillor, "that in a year or six months, when you return from Mobile with her as your wife, her dignity is not going to suffer. You are here to defend it. But to leave her here, to subject her again——" He wanted to convey his meaning so delicately that he paused for a word, a slight blush mounting to his pale, thin cheeks.

"That is what I have thought; what I am thinking now!" answered the chevalier.

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"We must manage, we must manage! Leave it to me. You see Madame de Sainte Hermine; persuade her to be ready the evening before you sail. I shall be there with the priest; the emergency warrants it—an emergency, my dear sir, that the Kings of France have had to meet. Even the great Louis Quatorze had to submit to what he could not change!"

"It is not possible!" the chevalier opposed him firmly.

"It is possible, and within our means, as you will see! Naturally, there can be no signing of contracts. Purely the strictly religious ceremony. When it is over, you go away! The next morning, at daylight, I bring your bride to you! You sail away together. When you arrive in Mobile, you establish yourself in a house; you will find plenty there. Tiens! Mandeville de Marigny still has his house there! Stay in his house. Make your arrangements with him. For three weeks at least you will be busy in Mobile; unable to leave. Three weeks of peace and happiness, and a quiet home; a honeymoon of three weeks! My dear sir, it is enough for any soldier! But where are you going?"

"To Madame de Sainte Hermine, monseigneur."

"You agree, then? You agree?"

"Monseigneur, I will do as you say." The chev-

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alier bent his head over the councillor's hand in gratitude and also in contrition for all his misconception, heretofore, of De la Chaise's character.

"No, no, not that way, my son!" said the councillor, hastily withdrawing his hand. Giving a rare pleasure to his repressed heart, he took the chevalier's head and drew it toward him, and kissed him on both cheeks. "God bless you!" escaped from his lips. No godfather could have been more affectionate.

Marie Alorge sat still in her Elysium, and could not return to earth. Where was it? She had forgotten it, notwithstanding all the show it made of blue sky and bright flowers.

Catherine, who never forgot it, was busy in another room going through the treadmill of her daily routine of household duties. She heard the gate open and saw the chevalier enter, but kept herself busy with her clatter.

Marie started up, dropping her embroidery, as he stood before her. He took her hands. Now it was her eyes that avoided his!

"Marie! Marie!" he whispered, "I must go away again!"

"Go away?" Her hands trembled in his, and her lips turned cold and pale. "Go away again!" she repeated, not knowing what she was saying.

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He put her back in her chair and sat in the low stool beside it. He told her all that had passed at the Council, and all that had passed between monseigneur and him afterwards. She drew herself up with the dignity that had come to her, as monseigneur had said.

"Yes, you must go to Mobile! The colony demands it; it is your duty!"

"But Marie, listen, listen!" And he went over again what she had failed to comprehend—monseigneur's arrangement for their union. "Marie, Marie! will you consent? God knows I am not worthy of you, but—but——" He was as humble as if he had been on his knees before the statue of the Virgin in the church.

"Yes, yes, I consent! I cannot do otherwise, as God knows!" She shook with emotion.

Catherine, whose eyes were always sharp enough for her work, and all else besides, judged now that her time had come to interfere. She entered the room brusquely.

"Ah, ça. Are you going to cry now, when there is nothing to cry about? Petite imbécile!"

"Catherine, Catherine, you do not know!"

"Pardi, but I do know! Monseigneur has told me all; we have no time to lose; there is a great deal to do! You go away, chevalier, and leave us alone, if you want us to be ready!"

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The chevalier did as she said. It was the first plunge he had made into the depths of a woman's heart! and he was awed; he felt that God, Himself, was talking to him, was telling him what in his simplicity he had never thought of, in connection with love. He with all his experience, and all his conceit of knowing it all!

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CHAPTER XVIII

AFTER, of course, the government and the Church, came Cariton the tailor in importance in the city, which in truth owed to him with respect, be it said, its saving grace and hope of salvation as a city of fashion and elegance.

It was entirely owing to Cariton that the officers maintained, in the colony, the style and presence of the officers at Versailles. He was firm in his convictions about the dress of gentlemen, and inexorable in imposing them upon the young officers who came to the colony, just as they were dug up from the rough, rude earth! "If you dress like a gentleman from Paris, you will act like a gentleman from Paris," was his simple creed.

It was Cariton who brought De la Loe, the great wig maker, from Paris, to New Orleans to look after the wigs of the councillors—for wigs, as every one knows, are almost as essential to royal councillors as heads—with the result that it was often remarked that, from the outside, the councillors of Louisiana could not be distinguished from the king's councillors in France!

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Ah, Madame Bifois, the silk stocking mender, she came, too, at Cariton's instigation, on her mission to mend the silk stockings of the officers and councilmen, which she kept in a state of perfection unknown anywhere else in America, even in Canada! It was whispered that he was thinking of importing a corsetière. Imagine—a corsetière!

Cariton was, in a word, one of the most useful members of the community; and as he was unmarried, the safest to trust with confidences. His shop was in the front room of his cabin, situated on the thoroughfare of Royal Street, just opposite the house of monseigneur. His door was always open on the street.

He was sitting on his table, busily stitching, when the chevalier entered, in search of his advice. He listened to the confidence with eyes cast down and mouth chewing away at a piece of thread to assure an aspect of perfect judicial equanimity.

"Monsieur le Chevalier, it is well that you have come to me; you have avoided a faux pas that might have been irreparable! Heaven has sent you here for your good."

He descended from his table, took from the shelf a package wrapped in tissue paper, and rewrapped in a bandanna handkerchief. Carefully undoing the cords with which it was tied, he took out a package enveloped again in silk paper. "Ah, mon-

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sieur, we cannot be too careful with such merchandise. Look!"

As if it had been a church vessel, he held reverently in his finger tips a box—a rosewood box, inlaid with mother-of-pearl and overlaid with gold traceries. "Real gold, Monsieur le Chevalier, and done by an artist." He turned it round, and finally with great ceremony put it on his table and opened it, with a gold key. "A workbox, Monsieur le Chevalier! What could be more appropriate and more poetically rendered?"

The chevalier's eyes glistened. It was, indeed, a nécessaire, such a box as his mother used in his childhood, and that he had described to his fiancée; scissors, thimble, pincushion, a sewing bird to fasten the sewing to the table, and the little instrument to make eyelets, all complete and all in gold with handles of mother-of-pearl, each in its allotted place of blue velvet on the tray.

The chevalier lifted the tray.

"That is where you put something else!"

The chevalier looked at him for more advice. Cariton was ready for the look.

"This is the 'corbeille de noces,' only that you must lay inside what is more important. This, for instance, Monsieur le Chevalier." He opened another package that he had placed in readiness on his table.

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"Ah, this! You will not find anything like this in the colony!" He opened it out: a long wide white lace scarf.

"Pure Spanish, made in Spain!" He shook it out. It was in truth so beautiful, so filmy, so poetical, as Cariton would have said, it suited only the most beautiful of brides, and the most generous of bridegrooms.

"Monsieur le Chevalier, with this veil she could appear at the court of Heaven! Can you not see her in it? And now silk stockings, Monsieur le Chevalier?"

"No, no!" The Chevalier shrank back in horror.

"You are right! They are too actual; not ideal, not poetical, in truth. But the gentlemen of today, they like such presents." He opened a white fan. "Spanish, too, Monsieur le Chevalier, and designed by an artist in Seville. See what he has written. Ah, the Spaniards! They are the real lovers of ladies! 'Te amo! te amo!' When she is fanning, she sees the words conveyed by the breeze. A-ah——"

Cariton did not venture to go on any farther. With a sigh bursting with sentiment, he wrapped up the parcel and tied it with white ribbon. "That is the proper way, Monsieur le Chevalier, and—but of course you need not to be told. You send it with a bouquet of white flowers, by your valet."

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Picot, at noon of the wedding-day, delivered the parcel from Cariton, tied with white ribbon, and the bunch of white flowers he had managed to cull from the gardens round about, duly tied also by Cariton with white ribbon, and made into a bouquet de mariée.

Madame Catherine, who, good Canadian that she was, could not imagine a ceremony without an accompanying feast, commanded Picot to do now what he had done about the flowers, collect good dishes from the restaurants of the city.

"No! No, Madame Catherine," he said firmly, raising his hand in deprecation of his refusal. "Monsieur le Chevalier will need me. After he has finished—at your disposition."

"Then it will be too late!" answered Dame Catherine with asperity. "But as you choose; if it is more important, your service to him——"

"Ah, Madame Catherine, you do not understand! Wait and see, and then you will understand!" was Picot's gentle reply as he walked away.

She did understand, when the chevalier presented himself, resplendent in looks and dress! Never had Picot achieved a smarter or more elegant queue, or attired a more finished chevalier! The very god of war himself could not have been handsomer, or more befittingly, more impressively dressed for his wedding.

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Mars, assuredly, must have envied him, and Jupiter on his throne felt jealous of the genius of the monarch who had invented such a uniform for an officer, a monarch who was more worthy of Olympus than of heaven!

Dressed in her pretty peasant costume, that she was saving to wear at her baby's wedding, Annette was not behind Picot in her achievements with the bride. Catherine had extracted from the trunk and placed on the bed the pretty flowered brocade, worn at Christmas, with the lace fichu and ruffled elbow sleeves.

Hardly daring to touch it with her rough fingers, Annette passed the dress delicately over the head of her lady, and put on her feet the white silk stockings clocked over the instep and the high-heeled satin slippers and shining buckles.

And then Annette paused. Something else, she felt, was needed. With a flash of inspiration, she divined the meaning of the white lace scarf, extended on the bed, picked it up with her fingers, and laid it over the black hair of Marie Alorge, the long ends hanging on each side.

"Wait, wait!" she called out in excitement, feeling another inspiration, which prompted her to break a spray of white jasmine from the bouquet and fasten the white veil with it.

"Madame, madame!" she exclaimed breath-

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lessly, clasping her hands ecstatically, "Look at yourself! Oh, I wish baby could see you!"

Monseigneur came, bringing with him the priest as he had promised. Not, we may be sure, one of the horny-handed Capuchins from the church; fitted only for the rough handling of common sheep, not for the handling of the aristocratic troubles of gentlemen. Doughty fighters that they were, they had managed to oust the fine-mannered Jesuits from the parish and had established themselves in it.

The Jesuit gentlemen, as they were always called, forbidden to exercise any ecclesiastical function in the parish, retired with dignity and courtesy from it, and went to the handsome plantation they had acquired, where they devoted themselves to agriculture, and to their experiments with the culture of sugar-cane, bestowing thereby upon the colony a benefit that one day was to make its financial fortune.

But their spiritual mission seemed to follow them as it always followed their order; and monseigneur and the ladies and gentlemen of the community held on to them as to priests of their own caste, at least on earth.

None of the Capuchins could have served monseigneur's need on this occasion, their rude, unsophisticated minds being too coarse to handle the

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delicate machinery of his mind; whereas a gentleman Jesuit, on the contrary, was expert in solving the problems that beset the higher walks of life.

Monseigneur had not chosen to wear his severe magisterial costume on an occasion of this sort; his taste and his heart forbade it. The chevalier, himself, was hardly more elegant than he, in his breeches and long, full-tailed coat of red velvet, and white satin waistcoat embroidered in gold, over a shirt as fine as royalty itself could wear, of the finest linen with pleats and ruffles that rose like waves over the bosom, and the sheerest of white cambric neckties, all furnished and made by the supreme shirt artist of the city, Genevieve Boyer, who was underpaid at her price of thirty francs a shirt. A price, in truth, that was always promised but seldom paid by the gallant gentlemen of fashion who patronized her.

Monseigneur's stockings, like the chevalier's, were drawn, according to the latest fashion, over the knee, and there fastened by garters with jeweled buckles; a fashion that enhanced incommensurably the beauty of the leg. Both gentlemen wore red-heeled slippers, that only men of the aristocracy were entitled to wear. Madame Catherine, as loyal to the laws as she was to the practices of the Church, and absolutely without taste in the matter of priests, made a movement of dis-

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approbation at sight of the Jesuit; but Monseigneur, with quiet and dominating self-composure, took the hand of the bride and led her before the homely, improvised little altar of the house, presided over by that good Canadian patroness, Notre Dame de Beaupré, to whose devotion Madame Catherine had given her heart from early youth and who, it would seem, had favoured her on manifold occasions.

The short ceremony over, and the record of it signed, with Picot and Dame Catherine as witnesses, the priest handed the paper to monseigneur, who had undertaken to send it to Paris for ratification by the high ecclesiastical authorities there. Then Picot came forward with his silver salver, offering champagne and cake, the only elements of a feast that Dame Catherine could assemble for the occasion.

For, as her simple soul saw it, after the ceremony champagne was an essential part of marriage. And champagne was always to be procured in New Orleans, which was as old as any city in France when it came to the use and practice of luxuries!

Monseigneur took the bride aside, and putting his hand in the pocket of his doublet took from it a small object. "My child, I beg you to keep this as a souvenir of this moment!" And he held

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before her eyes, hanging on a blue velvet ribbon, a medallion of gold in the shape of a heart, with a cross outlined upon it in seed pearls. "It comes from my uncle, the celebrated confessor of the king. He gave it to my mother on her marriage. After her death it was given to me!" He laid it in her open palm. "It was made under his direction and shows a pretty poetical conceit.

"My uncle, as you know, was a great connoisseur of hearts, and of crosses," he added, "and he had opportunities to devote himself to the study of both."

"Regardez en haut, regardez en bas, tournez-vous au dehors, rentrez au dedans, toujours vous trouverez la croix!" he repeated the musical words in his low, musical voice.

"La croix donc est toujours préparée, et elle vous attend partout, vous ne pouvez la fuir quelque part que vous alliez!" he added. It was the crosses, perhaps, that had left their mark on his pale, delicate face.

In the meantime, Dame Catherine had led the chevalier aside to impart what she had thought was a part of her maternal duty to tell him.

"My son, do not deceive yourself thinking she is too frail and delicate for a soldier's wife. Fine ladies make as good wives as common girls. Marie Alorge is not the poor young girl that came to us

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five years ago. She could not be imposed upon now, as she was then. She knows the world now, and she knows herself. And she has learned to work. She can do everything that I can do, and she can go about in sabots in wet weather, like a peasant. She loves you with her whole heart. My son, God has sent you the wife you want, and that you deserve!" She had much more to tell him, but she had not the force to go on. She, who had in her day shot Indians, had never learned not to fear her own tears.

Monseigneur took the chevalier by the arm, to urge him away, according to his programme. They left the house and walked together to the corner. There they separated to go each his own way.

But the way of the chevalier was not what monseigneur thought. He turned on his heel when his companion was out of sight, and came back to the little house; and there, taking his stand, with his cloak wrapped round him, he stood on sentinel duty, watching the lights flit past the windows and finally flicker out; still he watched until daylight began to appear, when he stole away towards the barracks, just in time to escape monseigneur, in the only chaise in the city, coming to fetch the bride!

The bride, inside the house, was just as wakeful and impatient for daylight as her husband.

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"Ah, Dame Catherine, I must get up and get ready! What is the use of staying in bed, when one cannot sleep? The night is too long! I keep dreaming the chevalier is here waiting for me."

The honeymoon was not three weeks spent, when it was eclipsed by the black news of Monsieur de la Chaise's death.

He died suddenly during the night; so suddenly that a rumour of poisoning was circulated, a rumour which was believed; for the great first councillor had made more enemies by his rigid fulfilment of duty than friends; and it was to the advantage of many that death should prevent any more prolonged examination of the public accounts and inflexible payment of debts, and even defalcations by delinquent creditors.

He died apparently alone, attended only by his servants, who described his sufferings during the night as intense. His wife was still in France. His two married daughters, with their husbands, were on the plantation. His two young sons and young daughter were with them.

In the afternoon, when the legal officers, with the two sons-in-law, came to affix the seals on his property, they found him lying on the bed in which he had died, a four-posted bed, with red damask curtains. He was dressed in his usual black

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clothes, as if ready for a sitting of the Council. His face was calm and impassive, but not more so than during life. His steel blue eyes, so dreaded by his victims, were closed at last to the world; and the general public felt at ease to invade his privacy, and his house was thrown open to them.

To the surprise of all, it was found furnished in the plainest manner, showing only the expenditures necessary for comfort, although he had had the wealth of the government in his keeping. His effects were sold at auction to provide a support for his minor children. His papers were sealed and sent to France, with the long report he had just finished for the directors of the Company. Was the certificate of marriage he had taken charge of among them? It was never known. From the Capuchins in New Orleans to the Capuchins in Mobile, the story went easily that there was no certificate of marriage bearing the name of the major commandant and the lady he was living with, in the records of the Church. It was a subtle stroke against the Jesuits!

The fact was brought to the chevalier while he was on one of his expeditions against the Indians, and he, who shrank from no danger or misfortune to himself, was tortured with cowardice before the shame to be inflicted upon his wife, now in the

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first happy moments of her life. Vainly he sought in his mind for the words he needed to tell her about the irregularity of their marriage, or rather the fact that, in the eyes of the Church, it was no marriage at all! They were not there, or refused to present themselves!

Weary and wasted from his three months of fighting with the Indians, he hurried to her side, only to fall at her feet in despair!

Taking her hands in his, as on the morning he had asked her love, he had his face upon them, and could only murmur incoherently. "It is my fault, Marie! My fault! I must bear the punishment—not you!" Loubois cried desperately. "Go from me, leave me; the suffering will be less for both of us!"

"What do you mean, Henri? What are you talking about?"—lifting his head and taking it in her arms. "Go from you? The Church——"

He told her.

"Henri, Henri!" she cried in relief. "Is that all? I thought that you were in danger. God be thanked! What does it matter? Henri, do not look so at me! Does it make me love you less? Can I love you more?"

She fondled his head in her arms, pressing her lips upon his, her beautiful face blushing with pride in her avowal. She arose, taking his arm

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in hers. "Come with me! You are tired and worn out! You need rest, food; come with me!"

He held back.

"But the Church, Marie, the Church! You do not understand! You do not see!"—sinking his voice to a whisper. "I—I have disgraced you! I—My God, I have disgraced you!"

"I do understand"—rising and taking his arm resolutely. "Oh, I do understand! It is the Church that does not understand. No, Henri, we must trust to monseigneur, still. He did not make a mistake; he could not make a mistake!" She drew him away with her. "We must talk no more about it! We must forget it! We can do that, Henri. We will do it in our love for each other. Come, come! You are hungry and tired."

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CHAPTER XIX

To return to the big car of history, on whose slow-moving wheels mortals are no more than flies! The directors of the Company of the Indies passed the colony, in haste, back to the crown, whose first act was to restore Bienville to Louisiana as governor, providing him with the soldiers and ammunition he required.

On his way to Louisiana, Bienville stopped at Santo Domingo, to see his old friends the Natchez warriors, in slavery there, and to hear from them what he wanted to know; of their revolt, and the hatred to the French that had provoked it. They told him all; ending with the burning of the old women in the Place d'Armes!

Bienville took up his residence in his old hotel in New Orleans, waving Périer aside with scant courtesy.

The big wheels of history move slowly. It took Bienville three years to make his preparations for a stroke against the Chickasaws, who were protecting the Natchez, had received and were sheltering them. But the hand of the old Canadian chief

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had not lost its cunning during the six years of idleness and discontent in Paris.

He led his great expedition across the Alabama country to attack the Chickasaws in their stronghold, the village of Acquia. But as he found out too late, the Chickasaw forts had been strengthened and fortified by English engineers into invulnerability, and he met with a speedy and bloody defeat; and with shame and humiliation brought his shattered army back to Mobile.

Dame Catherine sat in her room, idle, listless, dispirited over the stories brought to her of Bienville's defeat. Her grey head would not hold itself up. It had never before been called upon to bear the reproach of the triumph of the enemies of France.

The world was changed to her, at least the only part of it she knew, the Louisiana part of it. God had changed; turned His face away from it. He had not stood with Bienville in the Chickasaw expedition, after standing by him so often in more desperate fights. He had turned His back upon the French Army and allowed it to be almost annihilated! She took out of her bosom the great silver medal of Sainte Anne de Beaupré that she always wore, and gazed at it almost reproachfully. Sainte Anne might at least have stood by her faithful Canadians, who had always stood by her, and

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raised to her the most famous shrine in all America, to which Iberville, himself, the greatest of all Canadians, had given a magnificent silver crucifix! Surely Sainte Anne had not forgotten that! It stood on the great altar of her sanctuary. But, thank God, Iberville was dead and had been spared the disgrace of his brother Bienville. She loved Bienville from the time she had held him as a baby in her arms—Bienville, in spite of his defeat, the best of all the Le Moyne brothers!

She arrived at this point in her meditations when her door was opened, and brisk steps trod across the floor to her. Before she could hide her medal in her bosom again, and look up, Marie Alorge was kneeling before her, placing a bundle in her lap. "Mère, we have brought our baby to you!"—unfolding the covering from its head. The pretty little black-eyed, black-haired creature opened its sleepy eyes and stretched up its hands to the withered breast above it.

"Mère!"—the sweetest and most longed-for word in the ears of a woman. She held the baby close to her. "My children, my children! You have come back to me, to your home!"

The next morning, early, she carried the bundled baby out with her. When she returned with it, she held it to its mother. "Here, she is a Christian, now, and it is time!" While Marie took the child,

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the chevalier possessed himself of the folded paper in Catherine's hand and read it.

The square, rough sheet bore only the few necessary lines, in the awkward writing of the curé: "Marie Alorge, infant daughter of La Dame de Sainte Hermine."

What a chasm between that and what should have followed: "Legitimate wife of the Chevalier de Loubois," instead of which there was only "La Dame de Sainte Hermine and the Chevalier de Loubois!" A pain as keen as Bienville suffered over his defeat pierced his heart.

Marie glanced at the paper, but she saw, what he had not, that Bienville's name was signed as godfather. "De Bienville!" she exclaimed.

"But how, Catherine, is he godfather?"

"Pardi," answered the old woman gruffly, "I went to him first of all, and he had to say yes! I told him all; I explained to him. He understands now; he is no fool, Bienville!"

The little one, bright and gay, was kicking its feet gleefully, smiling and showing its new front teeth. It held out its arms to its father, its black eyes gleaming with the spark of mischief that lay in his own.

Overcome as in boyhood with sudden emotion, he bent his head and hid his face in the baby's white dress, while his sudden gush of tears flowed

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into it. The baby stretched out its hands and grasped his hair, and pulled and pulled at his queue.

"Ah, madame," commented Annette, when she came over shortly afterwards with her own little boy clinging to her skirts, "that is the best thing God does for us women, to give us babies! What would I have done without mine? And you will see"—and she began to expand about her own—"because, madame, as you know about reading and and writing, I know about babies!"

Bienville refused to see his old friend Loubois; resenting what seemed to him the disgrace brought upon the beautiful young woman whom he had placed above all others in his heart when a young man, one whom he would not venture even to love!

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CHAPTER XX

THREE years more were consumed in preparation for another attack upon the Chickasaws, to be delivered by way of the Mississippi, and a march across the country to their village. This time, Bienville planned to destroy them and to crush them completely; and he had received from France more reinforcements, infantry and artillery, commanded by competent officers of the royal army, with cannon and bombs.

A great flotilla of barges, such as had never been seen in the colony before, was gathered in New Orleans to convey them up the river. Never had Bienville felt more sure of himself; more confident of the good fighting Canadian blood in his veins. But, as before, success was not his!

From the moment he landed his army at the place selected, defeat hovered over him. Accidents and obstacles of all kinds united to thwart him. Nature herself fought against him; forests threw impenetrable thickets across his path; small rivulets were swollen by the rain to impassable torrents; fevers decimated his troops; the French officers and soldiers became spiritless in a warfare

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they loathed. A year was consumed in vain efforts to advance or even to retreat with safety. A council of war was held, and negotiations for peace drawn up, to save the prestige of the French flag. The Chickasaws agreed to it, and Bienville, a broken-hearted man, sneered at by the French officers, and despised by the Indians, his hold over them destroyed forever, returned to the city again, this time more humiliated than by his bloody repulse at Acquia.

De Loubois, the great pity in his heart overcoming his fierce resentment, hastened to him with his old impetuosity. He found him alone in his room, sitting at a tall table, his head on his hand. Before him was a paper, scrawled over by his uneducated handwriting, the ink still wet.

"Bienville!" he called, grasping his shoulder, "rouse yourself!"

Bienville shook his head without answering, and pointed to the letter before him. De Loubois took it up and read it. It was directed to the Minister of the Colonies. It read like an act of contrition and concluded with the words, "If success had responded to my endeavours, and devotion to the Government, and zeal for the King's service, I would willingly have consecrated to it the rest of my days; but a kind of fatality has lately thwarted my best conceived plans, and made me lose the

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fruit of my labours, and perhaps the confidence of Your Highness." He prayed to be allowed to resign from his position and return to France.

De Loubois laid the letter on the table.

"Fatality! That is no word for a soldier to use after defeat. In God's name, Bienville, do not send that letter! You must not give up. We must save the colony for France! We can do it; but we must set to work at once!"

But Bienville still would not answer; so with another grasp on his shoulder, Loubois left him, rallied the men in the city, and sent detachments up the river to hold the settlements safe from the Indians, directed by the English.

Bienville's prayer was granted. He was allowed to return to France. Catherine sailed on the same ship with him, to re-embark from France to Canada. She had no heart to live longer in the colony passing from under the Canadian domination to that of a French government.

"We discovered the country and we founded it!" she said. "The English would have discovered it but for Iberville. He planted the French flag here, and Bienville maintained it!"

She sold her house and her two slaves to the chevalier. The last the city saw of her, she was standing on the deck of the ship by the side of Bienville.

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De Loubois, until the arrival of the new governor, was given command of the colony.

The new governor showed himself in a short while prouder of his title than of his executive position. To maintain the prestige of the former, he established himself in the finest house in the city; a hotel with a stately porte-cochère, and a princely drawing-room furnished magnificently. Here he gave balls, receptions, and installed a little theatre, presiding over all with impeccable grace and distinction, surrounded by an eager circle of obsequious courtiers.

His duties of governor he disposed of with simplicity and originality; giving them over to underlings whose accounts he alone controlled. The defense of the harassed province he put upon the shoulders of the officers whom he found in command, tried and trained in the service of Indian fighting; vaunting himself in his reports to France of what was due to their sagacity and prowess.

In truth, to judge by his reports, the only existing records of administration, it would seem that he had cajoled history into giving him a page, carte blanche, to fill up with his own name. The staunch French officers who were kept on the frontier to their fighting, year in and year out—their names he did not write upon his page. Promotions and

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crosses were no longer asked for them as in the past. The little court of New Orleans ignored them as much as the great court of Versailles did.

From time to time, only, a scant leave of absence was granted to them; although, but for them, the French flag would long since have been replaced by the English in Louisiana!

Hence De Loubois had but small indulgence of his craving to be with his family. His love for it grew not by what it was fed on but by what it was deprived of; and when he came to the city, the little house that had grown up around his heart held him close in an embrace that he never tried to loosen.

The Chickasaws, as Bienville had foreseen, aided by the English, gave the colony little respite from anxieties and fears.

The Choctaws were by degrees weaned from their dependence on the French, and the tribe became divided in loyalty between the French and English, despite De Loubois's strong efforts to prevent it. It was in a fight between the two factions of the tribe that he received the treacherous arrow that wounded him in the breast—his first wound in the service of France. He was brought to New Orleans to be cared for by the good doctors there, who had long since superseded the garrison quacks.

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He became himself again in his old home; was gay and care-free, full of laughter, with his wife and the baby, whose charm was as bright and fresh to him as spring flowers.

"Marie, Marie!" he would say, "now it will be France for us! We will go to my mother and show her our baby! Oh, with all her children, she never had a baby like ours!"

The beautiful spring days passed, and the warm, luxurious summer came on.

Picot had dressed him and placed him in Dame Catherine's big arm-chair, filled with cushions. The doctor came and went, taking Picot out of the room for a whispered warning. The baby cried to come in, and demanded to be raised to her father's face, which she kissed over and over again, babbling "Papa, papa"; tangling her hands in his hair with delight. When Picot tried to remove her, she screamed in temper, and her mother had to come and take her away.

As soon as she was out of the room, the chevalier roused himself and called Picot. The man placed his ear near to listen. "Picot," he said in a low voice, "as soon as—as soon as——"

Picot nodded his head understandingly.

"Go to France—to my mother. Tell her all—all!"

By this time his wife had returned to take her

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place by his side. He looked at her, and she took his head in her arms, and laid it on her breast where she could caress and bend her face over it.

"Marie, Marie!" he whispered. "My love, my love!"

"My love, my love!" she murmured after him.

"My love," he said again still fainter, in his drowsiness, and he fell asleep.

Picot softly removed her arms, and laid the head back on the pillow. "He is asleep," he whispered. It was the sleep of death!

Picot dressed him in his finest uniform as if for a parade in heaven itself, where for beauty and stature he would hardly find an equal. Indeed to Marie, he was as she had seen him in the long-ago dream, during the fever, when they walked in heaven together!

Philippe de Mandeville came and embraced him. All the soldiers in the garrison filed in to salute him. In the afternoon, Mandeville returned to place over the sleeping soldier a banner of France —the pure white banner strewn with fleur-de-lis!

Picot laid upon his breast his tricorne and by his side his good sword.

When the bells began to toll, he was borne away on the shoulders of his soldiers. Philippe de Mandeville led the way to the church of St. Louis,

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where his own vault had been opened to receive him.

Marie, from behind the window, watched the little procession until it reached the church, and passed through the great throng there assembled. The marquis-governor and his glittering little court waited on the door-step, in a pompous show.

She heard the soft singing of the dirges, the soldiers on the outside kneeling, and, in a spirit of pure devotion and sorrow, adding their undertone "Miserere, miserere," and after that the shuffling of feet. When silence fell over it all, she sank to the floor, her head on the hard wood borne down by the weight of her tears.

She lay weeping until the darkness arrived, until she heard the voice of Annette: "Here is your baby, madame!" and felt the little one creeping over her, calling "Papa, papa!" trying to reach her hair.

Oh, the days, the days of sorrow in life! The days that heap up like sand on the shore, that cannot be counted, or distinguished one from the other.

The chevalier by his will left the usufruct of all his property to "La Dame de Sainte Hermine," at her death to go to his mother.

The little one that held out her arms to every tall soldier calling, "Papa, papa!" whose black

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eyes grew more and more like his and her pretty, mischievous little mouth——

She died three years later in an access of fever, after a congestive chill—the malady that at that time lay in wait for children in the city, like snakes in the grass, to strike without warning.

But she felt his arms around her, lifting her to the boat, and heard his voice in her ear: "There is no danger, madame, you must not be afraid! See, we are all with you!"

And they were always with her; they never left her—poor little Bébé, Madame Catherine, Bienville, monseigneur! They were all there, as were the clouds in the sky that she used to watch while waiting for him, sitting under the great magnolia tree, while she felt love growing in her heart.

She walked through her daily routine with calm industry. She taught Annette, and she taught the little boy. And she sewed and sewed, using her beautiful nécessaire. She sewed for the busy Annette, and sewed for the poor; making garments for the little children, which were distributed by the priest of the Church. No one knew of it but herself. When her bundle was completed, she would slip it inside the door of the church, and hasten away!

Her husband was on watch over her, and could see her; and this made her almost happy. His

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mother wrote to her and begged her to come with the little one and live with her; but the letter came too late.

The city that she had come to when it was in its cabin stage grew and prospered; the streets filled up with new colonists, who built great houses; but she saw nothing of this. It did not interest her. She cared only for what she had known with him. The governor offered to send her back to France; she refused.

"La Dame de Sainte Hermine! C'est la Dame de Sainte Hermine!" the people in the streets learned to whisper as she passed along. A slight, frail body in a black bombazine skirt and sacque, and a black shawl winter and summer. In her pale face her great soft eyes appeared larger than ever. Her black hair had turned snow white, but she walked as if she heard ever in her ears, "Do not be afraid, madame; we are all here!"

And still the years passed; she did not count them any more! Annette's husband died, and she, out of pity, she who needed pity, still had pity to give! She went to help her in her solitude. In Annette's home she fell ill of a cold and sent for the doctor, and with a sudden return of self-consciousness, she sent for the notary.

In a crumpled bundle of old official documents, mouldering in the charnel-house of documents, the

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archives of the State, the will has been discovered, dictated by La Dame de Sainte Hermine, one hundred and fifty-nine years before!

WILL OF THE DAME DE SAINTE HERMINE
OCTOBER 21st, 1765

On this the 21st day of October seventeen hundred and sixty five at four o'clock, I Royal Notary of the Province of Louisiana, in the City of New Orleans, with the undersigned witnesses, went at the request of the Dame de Sainte Hermine, to the residence of the widow Joseph, situated in this City on St. Philip Street, where the Dame de Sainte Hermine lodges.

Entering a small room, at the side of the parlour, we found the said Dame de Sainte Hermine, lying on a bed; sick in body, but well in mind, memory and intelligence. She requested us at once to receive her instructions about her will, for this purpose she had sent for us. Having given her name, she dictated her will as follows. First as apostolic and Roman Catholic, knowing that she must die, and that the hour of death is uncertain, she had recommended her soul to God, and to the Holy Virgin, and all the saints to intercede for her, that she might be received into the ranks of the blessed, in the heavenly courts, if God should so will it. She wished to be buried in the cemetery of this

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Parish, in the most modest way possible, by her testamentary executor hereafter named.

Item—Wishes and orders all debts to be paid; and every wrong if there be any righted.

Item—Independent and mistress of her rights, having no legitimate heirs in this colony, she leaves all the rest of her goods, after her debts are paid, to the obscure poor of this Parish (to the exclusion of the Charity Hospital, of this City), to be named by the Rev. Curé and Marguilliers of this Parish.

And for the execution of this will, has named the Seigneur Nattil, merchant in this city, whom she prays to undertake it, and by so doing to give her this last token of friendship.

This is all of her last will, and telling us she had nothing more to declare, it was read to her and reread to her in the presence of Sieurs Connard, called Laforet, and the Sieur Revoille, M.D., living in this city who affirmed that they had heard and understood her wishes and last will, made, dictated and read in the aforesaid house and room, the above stated day and year, and signed by the undersigned witnesses and Notary,

MARIE ALORGE SAINTE HERMINE.

Witnesses:

CONNARD.

REVOIL. GARIC, Notary.

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And just after signing it, the said dame, Alorge de Sainte Hermine, said to me and to the undersigned witnesses, that she wishes and so wills, that the mulatto, named François, son of her slave Marie aged twelve, should be freed, and given all the privileges of the freed, with the consent and at the pleasure of the Governor and Ordonnateur, which she wished to add to her will as a codicil, this she said and dictated in the presence of the same witnesses in the same place and at the same hour, and signed by her.

ALORGE ST. HERMINE.

Witnesses:

CONNARD.

REVOIL. GARIC, Notary.

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